773
[534] both the waters that flowed over the earth in the past and those that will spread over the world when Faro orders them (Fig. 4).

While awaiting that day, Faro continues his work. Taking the spiral route originally followed at the time of the reorganization of the world, every four centuries he travels about, inspecting the confines of the world, and then returns to the central point whence he surveys and governs the universe.

Chapter 2

The Representations

776 /34/ The duality of glã, in the microcosm that is man by his twin souls (ni and dya), is projected into the universe in the form of the pair, sky-earth, originally formed by the splitting of the spirit in two. The pair is represented by two supernatural powers, Faro and Pemba, to whom the principal Bambara cults are addressed.

Pemba is both spirit, strength, and matter. He is actually represented by an engraved piece of wood, symbol of plank originally responsible for the creation of all living things on earth. Theoretically, each family has one.

Faro, master of the word, reigns both in the sky and in the waters, which are the earthly reflection of the sky. In his capacity as master of the word and reorganizer of the universe, custodian of life, and guardian of souls, Faro, light and vibration, reigns in the seventh heaven. As master of the waters, he is described by the Bambara as a living being who has a body and is subject to metamorphosis. Yet to the initiated, he remains first and foremost a higher spirit, detached from contingencies and free in the exercise of the sovereign power conferred on him.

In order to understand fully the spirit of the Bambara religion, it is necessary to examine all the representations of these powers (1).

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114 1. A few authors have summarily described Faro, in particular, L. Tauxier in Religion bambara (pp. 142-145), in

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which he quotes Msgr. Bazin and the Abbé Henry. These authors have not disclosed the fundamental role of this power nor the area he covers.

It would be proper to compare here these representations with those observed by the Griaule missions in the Sudan such as the Nommo of the Dogon, the Domfé of the Kouroumba, and Faro or Yégou of the Bozo, and published in the following books and articles:

M. Griaule, Masques Dogon /Dogon Masks/; "Le Domfé des Kouroumba /The Domfé of Kouroumba/," Journal de la Société des Africanistes, Vol. II (1941), pp. 7-20. D. Paulme, Organisation sociale des Dogon /Social Organization of the Dogon/. S. de Ganay, Les Devises des Dogon /Dogon Device/; Le Binou Yébéné /The Yébéné Binou/. G. Dieterlen, Les Ames des Dogon; "Notes sur le Génie des Eaux chez les Bozo /Notes on the Water Spirit of the Bozo/," Journal de la Société des Africanistes, Vol. 12 (1942), pp. 149-155. G. Dieterlen and S. de Ganay, Le Génie des Eaux chez des Dogon /The Water Spirit among the Dogon/. M. Griaule, Dieu d'eau. Mrs. B. Appia has also published interesting observations in "Note sur le Génie des Eaux en Guinée /Note on the Water Spirit in Guinea/," Journal de la Société des Africanistes, Vol. 14 (1944), pp. 33-42.

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Pemba

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Pemba, born of primordial vibration, was originally a "globule," kuru, which whirled around to create the earth. While he was a whirlwind, a molecule broke off and became a seed, which fell onto the earth, sprouted and became the Acacia albida. The latter grew,

776 dried up, and fell; soon the only thing that remained of it was a block of wood called pembele. Out of its own substance, pembele created a female being, Mousso Koroni, and with her engendered all living things on earth, except for the human beings born of Faro. But following the disturbances created by Mousso Koroni, Pemba had to give up his power, and his Word became the property of Faro, who was entrusted with the reorganization of the universe.

Pemba was known to men who submitted to him on earth before they became aware of Faro who had remained secretly in the heavens (1). They worshipped him as their god and named him Ngala Pemba,

1. It is said:" Faro is a celestial being from above; if one says Pemba, it is because he has been seen on earth" (faro ye sana fɛ̃ ye; a fo pemba ye a ka yeli ye dugu la).

god Pemba, or Koni, to recall his origin and the awe inspired by creation (2).

2. The secret names of Pemba are innumerable.

The Pembele

778 776 At the present time, religious leaders and heads of families use the pembele to represent Pemba; it is a block of wood, the image of the original plank (3). This object has a hollow dug out in the

3. The symbolism of the pembele, summarized below, has been studied by S. de Ganay in "Aspect de mythologie et de symbolique bambara."

center, called sele dɛ̃, reminiscent of the hole at the bottom of the grave where the corpse is placed (4). Three times 22 slanted lines

4. See p. 248.

778 are engraved in the hollow; below it, two groups of seven lines, di-
776 vided in the left section into 3 and 4, and in the right /36/ section into 4 and 3. The 22 lines on the left represent Pemba, the creator; the 22 lines on the right, the transmission of his word and his power to Faro. The 22 central lines are "a testimony to the foreknowledge he had of all things (1), " and the symbol of the great works he accom-

1. See S. de Ganay, Aspect de mythologie et de symbolique bambara, p. 192.

plished at the dawn of creation.

The two groups of 7 lines represent Pemba, 3, and Mousso Koroni, 4, in order to recall how Pemba, originally androgynous, "separated himself from his feminine part so that the two parts might unite as male and female to produce living things"(2).

2. See S. de Ganay, op. cit., p. 195.

The wooden plank, in addition, is engraved at each end with 22 notches which are, to the left, Pemba and his words, and to the right, all the words entrusted to the spirits and still unknown to men.

The object, taken as a whole, is the image of the universe: its upper surface, upon which are inscribed the lines, is the sky; its lower surface is the earth; the four sides are the four directions of space. It is also the first grave ever dug for the ancestor; the sele dé concentrates "the active and latent energies." Here "the pembele can be considered as thought which is constantly unfolding and which, starting from its own substance, stretches out into time to entrust itself finally to Faro in the guise of the word" (3).

3. See S. de Ganay, op. cit., p. 191

Finally, the pembele summarizes the myth of the creation and organization of the world by the series of 22 lines that decorate it; the duality expressed in the double engraving of 7 lines; its shape, reminiscent of the primeval plank, generator of life on earth; and the wood of which it is made—wood from the balanza tree, formerly master of creation.

All these characteristics justify the name of Ngala, god, which is given to the pembele, for it possesses in addition all the power and

776 strength (nyama) of the divinity it represents (1).

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1. That strength is particularly active at the angles of the plank and thus takes on the name boy nyama, "venomous nyama."

778 The pembele is an altar, a guarantee of prosperity, life, and the spiritual and material patrimony of the group to which it belongs. There are different types of pembele: those belonging strictly to families, on which the meat eaten by the family is carved, and those belonging to sanctuaries, which must be engraved with symbolic marks. The small board used for circumcisions bears the same name; it /37/ recalls Mousso Koroni's mutilation on the pembele and the origin of the removal of foreskin and clitoris from the human body (2).

2. See p. 38.

The role of Pemba, as promoter of the force, nyama, which activates all beings, and as the hypostasis of the earth, is illustrated by the ritual use the Bambara made of the pembele which represents Pemba.

[764] After each death, the head of the family gathers the force, nyama, which emanates from the corpse, and entrusts it to the pembele, "which preserves it until a birth occurs in the family." A parallel ritual bestows the force of the dead ancestor on the newborn child (3).

3. See p. 253.

At the time of the ceremonies relating to the large pembele, "all the participants bring a small piece of meat which, after having been placed on the plank, is eaten raw so that fire may not destroy the beneficial nyama emanating from the divinity itself" (4).

4. S. de Ganay, op. cit., p. 199.

Finally, "in cases where it is necessary to obtain a maximum of nyama, infinitesimal slivers of wood are taken from the corners of the board, where its force is concentrated... However, if this practice is abused, the nyama of the earth becomes diminished. It is

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the latter... We are familiar enough with the Bambara agricultural customs, but none of them would have brought about the spread of the balanzas, their regular spacing in the fields, and their protection from goats. In almost all the cases we have observed, the balanzas are of considerable age, development and density. There lies in this subject a fine dissertation topic for a young ethnographer and naturalist." (pp. 135, 136).

The myths of the Bambara answer M. Roberty's questions.

/39/ Mousso Koroni

776 Mousso Koroni is the impure earth; she symbolizes all that is opposed to light: darkness, night, witchcraft. She is also the symbol of rebellion, disorder, and impurity. Pemba pursued her in vain in his effort to take back what he had given her: the "words" she had received from him were divulged to men in spite of him.

Although no cult honors her and no sacrifice is offered her, her name is cited in various ceremonies and mentioned in the chants; her actions are recalled by certain gestures in the ritual.

776 304 On the other hand, she is the initiator of the separation of the sexes realized in the human body by the removal of the foreskin and the clitoris, an operation which after her betrayal, she performed on all those she met. In this way, she placed them in the same state of rupture in which she found herself: a female principle as opposed to Pemba, the male principle. In addition, she is present in every human being in the form of an evil force, the wanzo, which she had communicated to all those she approached, and of which one must rid oneself through the methods she herself inaugurated: circumcision and excision (1).

1. See p. 95.

776 241 Mousso Koroni is also the originator of certain agricultural techniques which she taught men, and every year, in certain villages, she

776 241 is represented as making her nocturnal visitation at the time the grain is threshed. An old woman, dressed in rags, wearing old unmatched sandals, and carrying broken gourds, runs about the countryside simulating madness. She follows the mythological itinerary from west to south and from east to north, and then returns and sits down near the granaries (1).

[171]

1. However, the very first agricultural techniques known as fyɛ̃ ti (literally, cultivation of the wind) are recalled, particularly among the Bozo, by random sowings of a certain number of wild grasses, then cereals, in the fields where the harvest is offered to Faro. Similar rituals are celebrated in certain Bambara villages. The techniques taught by Mousso Koroni came after those "of the wind," and precede that of millet cultivation.

For information on some agricultural rituals of the Bozo, see G. Dieterlen, "L'Agriculture rituelle des Bozo /Ritual Agriculture of the Bozo/," Journal de la Société des Africanistes, Vol. 20 (1950).

776 857 Mousso Koroni's agricultural work and her unhappy wanderings are also represented in a children's ritual, carried out at night during the cultivation period. One of the players, the yukuri or dantoni (literally, little hunchback), wears sandals for ears, a hump at the small of his back, a cloth tail tied low about his waist. He goes begging from /40/ door to door, followed by all the uncircumcised of his neighborhood. He pretends to cultivate and to thresh grain while his companions intone chants recalling Mousso Koroni's mythical actions. After his round is finished and the presents of millet are gathered, the player, pursued by all the others, runs off and disappears amid catcalls.

776 241 783 But while this parody of cultivation, with its rituals and chants, recalls the phases of Mousso Koroni's disorderly life, the agricultural techniques she initiated earlier are in themselves an important expression of the reparation made to the confusions she had caused. Every hoeing by the farmer is a wound inflicted on the impure earth,

776 241 783 hence on Mousso Koroni. The ritual cultivation of millet, a noble activity to which every aristocratic Bambara must dedicate himself, is an institution which Faro taught in his time and constitutes a purification and a reordering of the soil (1).

1. Dugukolo be be dyuruma, "the whole earth is impure." But as only virgin soil is considered impure, it is also said: dyurumu be be dugukolo ka forow sani nyala do, "the whole earth is impure except for the cultivated fields." The word dugukolo (literally, bone of the earth) designates both the earth as a whole and the earth as matter. The same notions [171] concerning the impurity of the earth hold for the Dogon. See M. Griaule, Dieu d'eau, p. 94.

Faro

Faro's Shapes

776 Faro was a "voice" before he materialized into a body. In his role as master of the word and reorganizer of the universe, he is represented by a spiral, munu, in which he occupies the point of origin at all times. The spiral is situated in the center of the cardinal points (2). Its vibratory unrolling represents "the displacement of

2. This "central point," which is also the firmament, is described by the Bambara as sá tyema kolo, literally, the bone of the middle of the sky.

Faro for the realization of all things in the universe."

776 292 This image is materialized in a basketry headdress, yugu, with a spiral of eight turns. The straw sprigs that form the spokes supporting the spiral symbolize the vibration; the intervals, yugunye or eye of the yugu, which separate them are rays of light, the spiral representing

776 292 the daily movement of the sun "which unfolds until evening." The regularity of the rays symbolizes order and the classification of beings and things by Faro. The /41/ ends of the straw sprigs forming the spiral must remain free: they represent the infinite extension of Faro's realm and power. The hat is also a mask "which hides Faro's invisible face and through which he watches over the world" (1).

1. Today, a basket of considerably higher dimensions is made and used by women (See pl. I, b).

[613] The headgear yugu was formerly reserved for the king, who wore it under a turban. Certain deserving old men were also permitted to keep it. The rituals of making and wearing this headdress attest to the importance attributed to it. In particular, when an old man was [695] suspected of having committed a serious offense, his hat was pierced with four holes representing the four cardinal points. He was then made to wear it, thus submitting him to Faro's judgment; if found guilty, he died.

776 As the spirit of the waters, Faro is supposed to belong to the white race and his body to be half albino flesh and half copper (pl. I, c).

776 A myth relates how his physical being was formed.

773 When Faro caused the streaming waters to descend on earth, he manifested himself for a long time only by his voice. He had no body, and since he needed appropriate matter to achieve one, he bided his time in the waters of the sea.

The winged spirit Téliko, who had the body of an albino, wished one day, in his arrogance and jealousy, to cross the world in order to know it and to dominate it. Faro, warned by the dogfish, decided to seize his enemy's body to complete his own. The albino, who always flew, fed on his own substance. He chewed his own flesh and his bones were soon bare; the marrow came out of them. It turned into red copper which fell into the sea and nourished Faro.

While Téliko descended to the water level, the dogfish that was watching him sang in order to attract him. The albino, aware of the danger, climbed back to the highest heaven, attempting to continue his flight and to reach the ends of the world. But he quickly lost strength and after his dya had fallen into the waters, his body was

776 seized by Faro who, after giving the genitals to the dogfish, completed
773 his own physical being. His head and torso were made of the albino's flesh; his tail was of copper, as were his breasts, the "essential organs that fed and revived the world."

Faro's head can be compared to that of a white woman: his eyes are black and piercing; his hair is black, straight and long like a horsetail.

/42/ His ears are two holes with no outer ear, but are protected by two fins. Two necklaces of copper and gold hang from his neck and act as receivers, enabling him to hear all sounds and all words; the copper necklace reports idle talks of little importance; the gold one, secret conversations and powerful words. Faro puts all that the receivers collect in his fins, which are also the mirror reflecting all that his eyes have seen, both good or bad. He looks, shuts his eyes, and puts out his tongue; the images penetrate into his fins and classify themselves according to the regular movements of his tail. Thus, images and sounds are chronologically inscribed and can be brought before him at any moment "like a card pulled out of a file." In this way he knows to what use he can put things and events.

Both his hands—the right one male and the other female—and the end of his tail are webbed. Without any apparent sex, the preeminence of the feminine shape usually attributed to him recalls that he once impregnated himself in order to give birth to twin girls at the time the first waters streamed onto the earth.

Faro's appearance, which is linked to the problem of his origin, has been the object of legends and tales among the people. While these have attracted the scholar's attention, they present a serious problem. The legends are truncated, episodic, and often childish versions of an imposing myth, which is perfectly constructed and often expresses a dogma.

776 Two examples will be given of legends whose only interest here is
773 to suggest further research into myths forming the framework for
171 collective symbols. One of these legends is Peul /Fulani/, and the other Touareg /Tuareg/.

1. At a time when the Niger was but a narrow, deep river, a pregnant Peul woman asked some Bozo fishermen, who usually ferried people on request, to take her across the stream. At first they refused,

776 773 771 using her pregnancy as an excuse. As she insisted, they took her in their canoe, left her on the other shore, and went away.

As soon as she had landed, she was seized with pains of her labor. The water of the river dried up at the point where it had been deepest. A voice came out of it, advising the woman to bear her child there. She went down into the pit after having left her clothes on the shore.

From her womb there first came forth milk, honey, and precious stones (lulu) which dropped onto the milk and honey as though on /43/ a straw mat. The woman was writhing with pain: the child finally appeared feet first and fell on the stones. His hands and feet were webbed.

As the water began to reappear, she attempted to get away, but in vain. Her husband, who had run up to the river's edge and had found her clothing there, saw her appear three times holding the child above the waters. She then disappeared, carried away by the current. Both she and the child became Faro spirits.

2. The village of Siyango, located fifteen kilometers from Nyono, has a very deep, perennial natural well called ala kolo faro, Faro of the well of god, "or Mbata dyi," "water of Mbata." No one drinks its water. At the beginning of creation, a woman named Mbata lived alone and without water. She gave birth to twins. Exhausted and dying of thirst, she came out of the cave and, going down to the edge of the sand, prayed that God let her die if she could have no water. A spirit appeared and said to her: "God will entrust all waters to you; but he will first prepare you a home." A pit having been formed and filled with water, the woman stepped inside and was transformed into Faro. She then took her two children in with her; one became a male spirit and the other, a female spirit.

The pit extended underground through a kind of tunnel and Mbata, who had followed it down, came out again with so much water that the Niger was created.

The water of this well was soon forbidden to human beings, for if anyone looked at himself in it, Mbata would take hold of his shadow and make him fall. The corpse, using the underground passage, came out into the river. Those who threw themselves into the water sometimes also became Faro.

One day Mbata resumed her human shape and went to the market where she bought tomatoes. She asked those she met what they did for the spirit who owned the water they so much needed. She advised them to offer him copper and gold and to slaughter white rams at the well.

The following day, in order to give thanks to Faro, the villagers went to the edge of the well to the sound of drums and sacrificed the animal. The water swelled, seethed up, and formed a streat which still runs into the Niger today.

The composition of Faro's body determines the behavior of men in the rituals performed in his honor. While the usual offerings of blood, tomatoes, raw cereal mash, and baked cakes are consumed by him and returned to the givers in the shape of material possessions (children, millet, rain) or spiritual possessions (preservation of the souls of the living and the dead), the choice content of the offerings or sacrifices, the albino and copper, are reserved only for him and help increase his strength and stimulate his action. /44/ He absorbs them for his own sake; thus it is said that: "copper and albino are the sacrificial privileges of Faro."

Manifestations of Faro

All the atmospheric manifestations in the sky are evidence of Faro's presence and power. Rain, thunder, squalls, hail, and the rainbow all demonstrate his action. The lightning that bursts forth in the koblenkaba is a weapon, a small axe (sempere ni or dyele dẽ čini) which he throws from the top of the sky. If lightning strikes, it is a proof of his revenge. In the tree, the lightning hits the gecko (ala jugu), an evil animal which, when it lives in homes near the hearth, supposedly stirs up fires of conflagration. When lightning strikes men, it is in punishment for the breaking of a taboo. The stone axes, found at the point where lightning strikes, are collected and kept in the sanctuaries of the rain altars, to be used in case of drought or in the course of seasonal rites. They are also placed in the seeded fields, so that their strength, by communicating itself to the seed, may be beneficial to germination.

On earth, Faro is conceived of as a unique being whose principal home is the Niger; he is present everywhere. In practice, the Bambara believe that a spirit haunts each torrent, pond, or well, each gourd of water, each dewdrop; they call him dyi tigi, "master of water."

776 He takes on many forms. He can be seen in the brush as a gazelle feeding on wild tomatoes and onions. As a ram with golden fleece and wearing ear ornaments, he travels underground along gold veins. As a young and seductive woman he goes to the villages to seduce the boys and take them away with him. He is the head of the fleeting torrent that runs after a rainfall; he is the seething and swelling of the currents. He can be recognized in the bluish haze that floats above the ponds. A stream that dries up is a sign of his anger.

Faro's Realm

776 §21 At the beginning, the waters that originated in the "central springs of the sky" and streamed over the earth, were pure, clear, beneficial and "easy." But after Mousso Koroni's betrayal and that of the beings who listened to her, impurity was communicated to the earth /45/: the water that covered the earth clouded, changed color, and became "difficult." It either dried up or, on the contrary, flooded the land, drowning living beings.

Today only the streaming rain water has preserved its character, more especially the first rain that falls at the beginning of winter. [783] It is considered a purifying agent par excellence and is called dane sandyi, "water that sows," for it brings to the grains their soul, ni; the earth, sterile and "empty," becomes full and fertile, plants are reborn, animals and insects multiply (1).

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1. A person who is generous and good is referred to as being like this first rain. It is also said of the spirit: "the spirit [is good like] the first rain" (miri dane sandyi).

The terrestrial waters, Faro's kingdom, are classified into seven distinct realms. They are in layers which correspond to the seven parts of the sky and earth.

The first, dyi woyo "seething water," is surface water: it seethes when Faro makes himself known, and overflows in floods, as the heads of streams are swelled by the storm. It is also the lustral water used for purification and the water drawn for drinking. [783]

776 821 The second, dyi ble "red water," is Faro's copper, a reflection of koblenkaba or "red sky." It is similarly the seat of the spirit's warlike or punitive activities. Water of wrath and vengeful action, it drowns the guilty. Through it, Faro strikes the bodies and health of those who do not recognize his dominion.

Faro prefers to sojourn in the dyi fi, "black water," where he keeps his secrets. It is to this water that one prays to seek grace. It is from the dyi fi that the twelve future waters will flow.

Calm and felicity reign in the dyi sumane, "cold water," where the fish live. The dya of earthly bwings are preserved in it.

While Faro drowns those he punishes in the dyi ble, it is in the madũ (literally, person, to eat) that their bodies rot or become the prey of fish.

The sixth category of water, kosira (literally, thing of fear) is a jail. In it Faro temporarily places all that comes under his domination.

The seventh water, dyi wolõflã, corresponds to the seventh heaven.

776 823 782 In the Niger, the places inhabited by Faro bear the general name of faro tyin. These are mostly deep depressions, well known to the shore dwellers, particularly the Bozo. /46/ Sometimes a consecrated stone, placed on the shore, receives the sacrifices offered to the spirit.

The most celebrated is a place called Souko, located upstream from Koulikoro near the village of Kayo. The local spirit engendered all that now lives in the river. Because of this he is worshipped by all Bozo and Somono fishermen, who used to send delegations to the annual sacrifice that took place during the dry season.

776 823 The Faro of Ségou lives in the Faka, a deep hole located close to the right bank, facing the town. Legend has it that the Faka is extended by tunnels: one links the river to the Bani while the other opens out at Dya and was used by the founders of the settlement in mythical times.

[825] The Faka is placed under the guardianship of a crocodile to which each year the inhabitants offered victims. At the bottom of the hõle there is a fat blind scaleless polyo, which the fishermen always return to the water if they catch it in their nets "because it is Faro's gate-keeper." In olden times, a flat stone upon which were traced a representation of Faro and black dots equal in number to the inhabitants of Ségou was visible in the deepest part of the waters. On [782] this occasion an albino was sacrificed (by slitting his throat) and the first fruits of the harvest were offered to the spirit.

776 823 782 On market day, a gourd filled with river water, called fle ndinye faro, is placed close to the shore where the canoes land. To drink a mouthful of this water is equivalent to a sacrifice to the spirit. The drinker gives a cowrie as alms to the beggar who drew the water, for "never can [Faro's] water be bought or sold" (1).

1. Ma ti dyi fere ma ti dyi sã̃.
See pl. II, b.

At Sama, the faro tyin is a kind of natural corridor located amidst the rocks bordering and overhanging the left bank of the river.

[825] The finches nesting there warn the boatmen of the place's sanctity by flying off; the boatmen then stop to pray. In passing, they throw an offering and those who have broken taboos purify themselves by washing. Each shows the spirit all that he carries with him. Two nearby trees, faro sõ̃ndyiri or "trees of Faro's sacrifice," are used to tie up the white bulls at twilight. The following day, they are thrown alive into the river with millet mash and cola nuts. At the bottom of the passage, on a fairly smooth surface, the image of Faro described above was drawn each year in the course of the ceremony celebrated by the society of the Komo.

/47/ Faro also haunts ponds and wells. In the village of Nango a natural well was revealed to a hunter by a white ram which appeared out of a thicket. The village was built after the discovery of the water hole where the inhabitants now worship the spirit.

In the village of Siyango, the water of the well in which Faro resides is tabooed, the site of the well being the seat of all the religious ceremonies of the villagers. There the newborn are presented, and deaths and marriages announced. The sick are treated by being [755] made to drink the well water and wash in it. From his herd, each person offers every year an animal which is thrown alive into the pit. [681] Finally, those condemned to death are executed by drowning in the same spot.

Faro's Auxiliaries

776 773 Faro has placed spirits as his representatives in the skies, in space, on earth, in the trees, and in the rocks of the mountains. They see

776 to it that all things proceed in good order. In addition he is accom-
773 panied by auxiliaries who participate in his work.

The most important of these is his "secretary," the bolokuruni, a blacksmith of the black race who had lost the use of his hands and who went to live with Faro after his crippling.

This blacksmith lived on earth at a time when craftsmen did not know the use of tongs and used to seize the red iron in their bare hands to carry it to the anvil. The man who was to become Faro's companion had reached an advanced age and was still practicing his art when one day both his wrists were broken by the hammer of a clumsy apprentice. Mad with pain, he ran to the river and threw himself in to ease his suffering. Seeing that in his grief the man had turned to him, Faro took pity on him and kept him at his side. His body was never found and a diviner told his family the happy event of his disappearance.

The bolokuruni accompanies Faro and assists him in his incessant labor. He is the one who consults the register in Faro's fins in which everything is inscribed. "The requested image is sent from the fins into the pupil of Faro's eye which the blacksmith watches." As this image is reflected in the servitor's eye, he uses it according to the orders he receives. Thus he verifies daily the count of those living and dead.

776 /48/ The spirit has numerous auxiliaries among the animals. His
825 airborne messenger is the swallow. It never rests upon the impure earth and its wings, reproduced on the headdress of the old men, symbolize the words it carries. The scorpion's stinger is the weapon given by Faro to the original twins: whoever attacks or wounds a twin is stung by this insect. The crocodile is the executor of Faro's important works: it kills those guilty of breaking taboos, or chases undesirables away from the river's edge. The scaleless fish, called kokoni, directed the first streaming of the waters on earth (1). The

1. See p. 33.

tneni (2) is Faro's "ordure" which it is the duty of someone to sweep

2. Alestes nigrilineatus.

776 925

up (1). The small miri (2), "mother of fish," is regarded as the

1. The ordure has its use in religious life. See p. 258.

2. Micralestes acutidens.

creator and guardian of all fish. Its name is associated with all prayers that are recited on the waters. The dodo (3) is Faro's messenger in

3. Tétrodon fahaka.

the waters and transmits his orders and directives, and the polyo (4)

4. The polyo fi is Herterobranchus longifilis; the polyo ble is Heterobranchus bidorsalis.

is the gatekeeper, controlling those who wish to penetrate into the spirit's domain.

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Certain plants are in constant communication with him. The yayale (5), "Faro's grass," grew on the mound where the mythical twins

5. Andropogon (Hyparrhenia) hirtus.

were born. The tomato, ngoyo (6), is assimilated in the blood. It

6. Lycopersicum cerasiforme, the native tomato (pl. II, a).

carries within it the potential embryo for its seeds are multiples of seven, the number of duality. It is by means of the tomato that Faro impregnates women for it possesses, like humans and animals, a ni and a dya. When it has a double bloom, the two twin tomatoes are given to the women so that they may bear twins. If the fruit is single on the stem, it is split in two to be cooked and eaten. The gesture of splitting separates it symbolically from its dya which is thus returned to Faro (7).

776 824 7. Only vegetables whose spiritual essence does not have to be preserved are cooked, "for to cook is to shatter the soul."

776 824 244 782 In each village are grown one or several small fields of tomatoes, called "Faro's fields," or "fields of twins." The fruits of these fields are reserved for the worship of the spirit (1).

1. On the site of the ancient village of Soroba, at the edge of a pond located near the present-day village, there are two rectangular fields of tomatoes dedicated to male twins and four square fields dedicated to female twins in the village. Each year the villagers gather at the edge of the pond for a ceremony. The symbolic words relating to twins are recited and a prayer is said, to be followed by ablutions.

The fruit that is harvested is offered to the spirit by squashing it on a neighboring tree trunk.

776 823 /49/ All metals belong to Faro. The seven /sic/ principal metals are the following: copper (male), brass (female), gold, silver, tin, and iron. Copper and brass come from the fifth sky (koblenkaba). They descend at each thunderclap and, along with the "thunderstones," penetrated into the soil. They were discovered by a diviner at the bottom of a pond that had dried up because of a broken taboo. Be- [301] cause of their divine origin, copper and brass represent "Faro's sounds." These sounds twist themselves around the spiralled copper or brass earrings that everyone wears and penetrate the eardrum, thus making it possible to hear words. Gold plays a part in the building of certain altars (boli) to which it confers strength and stability.

The sacrifices made with or on copper, brass, or gold have a restraining influence on the spirit for they are of his own essence.

No woman wearing copper, brass, or gold jewelry, may cross the Niger without opening her luggage out of deference to the spirit, for "all ornaments belong to him and often must be returned to him after death.

[184] It is taboo to bring metal into contact with cow's butter, an oily substance that does not allow water to penetrate.

Ba 776 436 Legend has it that cowrie shells, widespread throughout Black Africa and used as money, come from the deep water where Faro keeps his fortune. Faro "sleeps on a bed of cowrie." Their mythical origin explains their role and both the economic and religious value attributed to them.

Ba 776 823 The black earth of the river banks, bogo fi, such as that found on the sea shore in sandy places, contains the strength of the spirit and is used in numerous rites. Smeared at the base of the interior walls of the huts, it symbolizes Faro's presence in the bosom of the family. It serves to decorate the headdress of the circumcised (1). Those who

1. See p. 233, Fig. 14.

live far from the Niger or from any source of water pray to it as if addressing Faro.

Ba 776 173 Some men occupy a privileged position in their relationship with the spirit. The first are the eight mythical ancestors, the eldest of whom is Koumabana. They received the word of the spirit, transmitted it to their descendants, explained before dying the new order of things, and instituted the cult.

At present they are still venerated as the prototypes of /50/ the human being in his new environment. Along with immortality, man lost the heavenly food which, until then, had been sufficient to nourish him. The articulated limbs which were provided for him dedicated him to manual labor, the techniques of which were taught him little by little. On the other hand, in the spiritual domain a deep change also occurred. In primitive times, man lived an almost animal existence and was without any responsibility. His abandonment by the balanza brought him suffering and death, but with them, his consciousness, symbolized by Faro's "word," developed. Along with death, illness, sorrow, bad instincts and the hard daily labor, there appeared also man's feeling about his own person and his place in an ordered universe, governed by Faro, as opposed to primitive chaos.

The eight ancestors taught men to venerate Faro, to ask him for all they needed, and to thank him for all they received. Therefore their names are invoked in most prayers and the episodes of their lives are told to the young to whom their works are held up as an example.

Bo 776 773 Mention should also be made here of the special position held by the Bozo who were born to the mythical girl twins, daughters of Faro (2).

1:Dieterlen--79 E-5 (1946-1949) 1951 FA8 Bambara FA8
Bozo MS6

2. See p. 33, n. 4.

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In many cases, this origin enables them to intervene with the spirit, where others are helpless. Born as twins of the master of the waters, the Bozo never suffered the contamination caused by Mousso Koroni which affects all other men. Because of this fact it is possible for them to establish communication with the spirit at the bottom of ponds or in the river and to seek out the bodies of those drowned. The fishing rights conferred on them by Faro were never contested by the conquerors who settled on the shore of the Niger during the historic period.

Numerous articles or essays have already been published on the Bozo. Their language and fishing techniques have been studied. However, inquiries into their religion and the image they have of themselves prove very difficult. This is caused, on the one hand, by their apparent conversion to Islam and, on the other, by their reticence in discussing their traditional system. Such a contribution, however, will be indispensable to scholarship in the study of certain aspects of Sudanese metaphysics, particularly that of the Bambara and the Dogon. The myths of both groups mention the apparition of the Bozo on earth as coinciding with the beginning of /51/ Faro's actions which, in turn, coincides with the development of techniques among the Bambara, and with the "third word" of the Dogon (1).

1. See M. Griaule, Dieu d'eau.

In addition, the "joking relationships" which they maintain with the Dogon and which go back to the origin of a whole system of tribal and intertribal alliances clearly indicate the importance of the symbolic role conferred upon them (2).

2. See p. 119, n. 1.

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Whenever he feels the need, Faro carries women and young girls off to his watery home. Many disappearances in the course of river crossings by canoe are attributed to him.

In olden times, each year a young virgin, chosen for her beauty by the griot of the village, became the wife and servant of Faro. In most cases she was willing and proud to become his eternal companion. On a designated day, wearing her finest jewelry, she was

brought to the middle of the river and thrown in while the villagers prayed the spirit to give the village his protection and to bring rain to future harvests.

Faro's Taboos

All of Faro's subjects, in particular the Bambara of both sexes and of all ages, are requested to respect a certain number of taboos.

The black earth, bogo fi, of the river banks, used ritually in many instances, would be excellent in pottery making. The women potters, however, cannot use it because it blackens in the process of baking. No pottery that has been fired may be washed in those places haunted by the spirit (1).

1. At Ségou, numerous drownings are blamed on the increasing frequency with which this taboo is broken.

Butter in many places is forbidden by Faro and may not be preserved in water. (2)

2. This taboo is linked to the relation between Faro and the Peul, but the nature of their relationship has not been clarified.

No one crosses the river without opening his luggage and presenting Faro with the gold, copper, or food it contains. As a rule, the wearing of metals is forbidden in those places haunted by the spirit.

The principal taboo concerns menstrual blood which was originally caused to flow because of the sins and impurity of Mousso /52/ Koroni. No menstruating woman may visit the places inhabited by Faro; none may draw water, wash clothes or cooking utensils, or cleanse herself in any of these spots. In addition, a man whose wife is in such condition must refrain from appearing at religious ceremonies or, if he is a priest, from performing the ritual.

In this part of Africa, as in many others, menses are conceived of as a necessary flow of empty blood, impure because it has not contributed to the formation of the foetus, the embryo of which each

776 woman carries within her. (1) Deprived of Faro's essentially im-

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1. See G. Dieterlen, "Mécanisme de l'impureté chez les Dogon" /The Mechanism of Impurity Among the Dogon/ Journal de la Société des Africanistes, Vol. 17 (1947), pp. 82 ff.

pregnating power and contrary to its generating action, this blood is considered evil, and all that recalls it or comes near it is excluded from the ritual.

Faro's Character, Role, and Deed

776 The principal characteristics of Faro's deed in creation are: omnipotence, omnipresence, and benevolence. Everything, whether animate or inanimate, depends on him in time and space.

The Bambara are extremely sensitive to Faro's power over the universe. They say: "Neither by day nor by night does Faro stop his incessant work." He sees to the efficient workings of the order which he inaugurated and which requires constant attention. His time is divided: from dawn until evening he occupies himself with the earth and its inhabitants; the next twelve hours' work is devoted to aquatic animals and members of his own family. Procreation depends on his will; it is he who, in the sky and in the water, controls the physical and spiritual life of all beings: the soul and vital force. In due order, with which the humans cooperate by observing his laws, he maintains life and makes the new bodies participate in the functioning of the universe according to a regular rhythm. Souls are reincarnated, assuring the continuity of spiritual forces in the world. The same power directs all acts of individual and social life: birth, circumcision, excision, initiation, marriage, agricultural work, voyages, war or peace.

Throughout the development of individual life, it is Faro who maintains man's physical integrity: he gives him health, necessary to
[153] action. Sickness is always /53/ considered a loss of strength which the individual must ask Faro to restore. The sovereign master of man's life, he has the power to take it away from him.

776 773 At death, he takes back the spiritual principles of the diseased and preserves them in water so as to reintegrate them into another body, thus using forces which are eternally reusable. The product of the "shedding" (mana or folo) of souls which remain on the altars is for him in a way of constantly verifying the account of those living and dead who are entrusted to him.

On earth, men are indebted to him for all they possess. He gave them language, an expression of thought, and taught them its usage, having warned them against the misuse and evil use of words.

The techniques of survival, another expression of "Faro's words," so necessary to their lives since they have to provide the means for their existence, were revealed to them by the spirit. He helped them with his sovereign power, either by directly providing them with new tools, or by inspiring some of them to develop new techniques by putting to use observed facts. In this way, he gave the Bozo fishing nets which enabled them to catch the first recorded animal food, the fish; likewise, he encouraged among the Bambara the discovery of weaving through observing the spider's web.

He also gave men certain seeds which became the origin of farming, such as cotton and fonio, both of them being known before millet and the other cereals.

As proprietor of cowrie shells and metals, he is the master of wealth, distributing it as he pleases. Thus, one who owns precious [782] metal is responsible to Faro for it and owes him a part of one's earnings. For this reason many offerings are made by throwing gold or copper into the river.

776 241 Faro's deed is essential where the Bambara's main activity, agricultural work, is concerned. Every man with dignity and nobility must cultivate the earth in order to honor Faro. Each stroke of the hoe is a wound inflicted upon the earth and a punishment for its impurity. Each stroke of the hoe humiliates Mousso Koroni and purifies the earth. Faro watches over the soul and the vital force of the seeds. Only he can provide rain necessary to germination, for rain contains the soul, (ni) of the cereal grains as does the water of ponds and streams which one collects in case of drought.

776 774 241 Millet receives its soul as soon as it gets the humidity of the earth, and from that time on, it accompanies the various stages of germination with utterances which, at the beginning of the world, could be heard. As soon as /54/ it has received the rain, the seed splits and says: "My place is assigned." Then the sprout comes out of the earth

776 with the words: "May I be protected." Finally the growth of the stem
774 is accompanied by a third utterance: "May I be obeyed" (1). It pre-
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1. These are the three formula:
ndyora, nga kolosi, nga bunye.

serves its soul until full maturity, that is, the moment is is harvested. When the harvester's blade cuts the spike or the cluster, the plant sends its soul into Faro's realm with these words: "Iron is forbidden my grain; soul, go away to the house of water" (2). Thus deprived

2. Neke ye nkise tne ye, ni, ta dyi so la.

of its soul, the millet becomes suitable for eating and it says: "If I were not dead, I could not be eaten; my breed cannot be lost: whether or not I am eaten, nothing can reduce me for my soul is in water" (3).

3. Ni ná sale te nti dũ, n šia tise ka tunu,
ndunaw ma dũn wo, fẽ te bwona, ni be dyi la.

776 Many agrarian rituals are celebrated in order to assure Faro's pro-
241 tection. The high quality of the first fruits of the harvest offered to him indicates the importance of his role. It is in fact a payment made to him for the past harvest and in anticipation of the harvest to come.

776 He is also the guardian of the artisan's skill. The first object forged by the young blacksmith and the first spindle of thread woven by the young weaver are brought to him. Through this gesture, the individual entrusts him with both his work and his manual dexterity. After Faro has seen the work, he does not let the worker forget what he has learned and will help him perfect his skill.

Faro is a judge. Those who break the rules he has made are the object of his righteous wrath: those who are drowned or struck by lightning are always persons who have broken a taboo. Men submit most difficult cases to him as a last resort. Through the intermediary of the agents of different rituals such as the intermediary of the diviners, he answers requests and "settles the words." Most prayers
776 are addressed to him and in many cases the invocations end with his
782 name. He is omnipresent, invoked everywhere, and the seat of his power, as of all others, is the seventh heaven, to which the Bambara

address the following: "Seventh heaven, you are large, you are long; your west is red; your east is white; your north is great; your south is black; seventh heaven, you are the king of seats among all seats, you are the great generator of the power of all powers, you are the great discoverer of all secrets, you are the source of all /55/ fortunes, you are the place where the common weal may not be destroyed; source of all things, deliver me from sin" (1).

1. Wolo flã̃ kaba, i ka bo, i ka dyã̃, i kle bi ka ble, i koro ka dye, i baba ka bo, i bani ka fi; wolo flã̃ kaba, siki yoro u la sikiyoro masa, fanga u la fanga ba sindi, gundow be ladyele fara be, nafolo be ladyele boyoro, dyẽ̃ wari dũ̃ bali yoro; ko be boyoro, hake tonye.

This prayer is recited by the head of the family during childbirth, a grave illness, or a death. It was also used during rituals of the enthronement of kings or chiefs.

Pemba and Faro, the complementary principles, were both born of the spirit, miri, at the beginning of the universe. In considering the psychological aspects of their symbolic roles, one can understand why, despite the antecedence of Pemba's role, from time to time the Bambara say that "Faro is the eldest." For he represents, in the human microcosm, the will and wisdom capable of controlling the propulsion of sexual instinct as symbolized by the prolificness of the balanza as well as the violence and disorder of the emotions as expressed in Mousso Koroni's vertiginous chthonian voyage and her madness. The antithesis of the sexes, realized in the myth by the bodily separation of Pemba and Mousso Koroni, and their disagreements and quarrels which are the origin of all cosmic disorders, are compensated for by harmonious agreement and union, as established by Faro in his androgynous state. Faro is the dual vibration which, from then on, orders the universe; he is reason and moderation opposed to the overwhelming force of the balanza; he is the light of the spirit which triumphs over darkness and primordial gropings.

Spiritual Principles (1)

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1. A few comments on the spiritual principles of the Bambara (in particular on the dya and the nyama) have been collected in the chapter entitled "Théorie des âmes" by Tauxier, La Religion bambara (pp. 14-25), in which the author appraises the works of the Abbé Henry and of Ch. Monteil. Some of the observations made in the following chapter have been summarized by the author in "La Personne chez les Bambara" and in "Note sur le tere chez les Bambara /Note on the Tere among the Bambara/."

It will be useful to compare this study of spiritual principles with the studies made among the Dogon and presented respectively by M. Griaule, S. de Ganay, and the author in Masques Dogon, Les Devises des Dogon, and Les Âmes des Dogon.

761 The Soul, ni, and the Double, dya:

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826 Faro controls the principle of life in water, which is his realm as well as the life-giving element par excellence. In the bodies of living beings, this principle has its seat in the blood. The blood of the sacrifices offered to the spirit (or failing that, the juice of the tomato, a transformation of blood) is a contribution to the reservoir of life controlled by Faro—life which he redistributes in all its forms throughout the universe. Water is the privileged element in which life may persevere indefinitely. Elsewhere, life is maintained only if water comes to nourish it.

761 776 842 833 Faro's creative function is materialized by each marital partner eating a tomato before sexual relations. This act is accompanied by the recital of a prayer. The juice of the fruit, which contains the body of the future child, transmits life according to the following mechanism:

761 776 842 824 Faro receives the offerings of tomatoes grown ritually in the consecrated fields, as well as the blood of victims slain in his name above the waters. Blood and juice, spreading over water, the fertilizing agent, are collected by the swallow, Faro's airborne messenger. Liberated in space, they return to the soil with fertilizing rain and penetrate the tomato seeds which thus contain a particle of generative power.

761 After the marital couple has absorbed the fruit, a smooth-bodied
776 embryo with nonarticulated limbs is formed in the maternal womb.
842 /58/ It is at this moment that the couple consummate the sexual act in the course of which the woman "takes into herself the entire body of her husband": the upper part through the eyes, the lower part through the genital organs. The masculine seed located in the seven principal articulations (knees, elbows, ankles, and spine) transmits them to the embryo. The body, originally similar to the body of the spirit, thus becomes that of a human being.

The spirit restows the spiritual forces after the man has mated for the second time with his wife. If the woman bears a single child it means that the man, in the course of the second union, formed the double of the first germ, but was not permitted to procreate twins.

761 Faro disposes of the child's life and nature. He decides all that the
776 child will be and will do, and determines his destiny from the moment
843 the seed is placed by him in the womb. The foetus then develops
774 with no further modifications until parturition, at which time it receives the spiritual principles, the soul, ni, and the double, dya, which will be his throughout his life. It is at this time that the inner relations of the individual to the social group to which he belongs intervene. Although Faro gives each child a new body, he animates this body with spiritual forces drawn from the family reservoir. The
[775] newborn child is the direct heir to the ni and the dya of a deceased member of the family, actually of the one, whatever one's sex, who died shortly before the birth of the child (1).

1. The reincarnation of the deceased's spiritual principles, however, is not an absolute rule. Faro is the master of an infinite reserve of souls. Twins, albinos, and certain other children are born with the ni and dya as yet undetermined. They originate respectively in the second sky (kaba dye) and in water (dyi sumale). Further study on this particular point is necessary to complete this investigation.

761 The consequence of death was, in effect, to separate the corpse
776 from the forces that animated it. The ni, by appropriate ritual, had
774 been preserved on the altar of the ancestors (2), and the dya had left
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2. Grouped hierarchally, children, male adults, and women form religious societies or institutions, dyo. Each dyo is charged with the upkeep of altars which serve to preserve the spiritual forces of the group. (See p.

the dying man to go into the water and place itself under Faro's protection. At the moment of delivery, both ni and dya return to the body of the newborn child who replaces the dead man, but they return in reversed order: the dya is returned to the body of the child and becomes his ni; the ni of the deceased mixes with the birth water spread on the ground which forms the shadow (suma) and will be his double, the twin (1). In the case of a boy, the dya will be female; in the

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1. The blood of childbirth represents the excess tomato juice absorbed by the woman, that which remains in the womb after the formation of the embryo. On the eighth day after birth, the mother of the parturient woman squeezes three or four tomatoes (depending on the sex of the newborn) into a gourd which she then gives to the child's father. The latter makes his wife drink the juice to replace the blood which she has lost and which is considered impure.

case /59/ of a girl, it will be male. These movements are independent of the sex of the deceased as the spirit reverses the sexes when necessary. Each human being is thus both male and female
[828] through his soul and his double. This conception of human nature, which is fundamental to the Bambara, is expressed in the symbolism
[801] of numbers. The number seven is formed of three (male sexual symbol) and four (female sexual symbol) and represents the complete man. In addition, on another level, the number six is that of male twins, seven that of mixed twins (and the hermaphrodite), and eight that of female twins. The body of the newborn child is gently tapped
[844] by the number of strokes representing the above figures in order to call the child's ni according to its sex.

826 827 The mouth and tongue, ejectors of the word, can be compared in importance to the ear, a receptive organ. It is through the ear that man receives and remembers the word. Its role is comparable to that of the sex organs which eject life and receive it. The ear in itself has both sexes: male by its auricle, female by its orifice. This duality expresses the basic duality of man. That is why the corpse of [164] an uncircumcised man is sometimes amputated at the ear rather than at the foreskin.

826 301 Because of the symbolism of its shape and because of its function, the ear is adorned. Men formerly wore three copper rings on the right ear and four on the left, the number seven representing the complete being, male and female, ni and dya. Women wear four rings on each auricle or, if they can, twenty-two, which represent the twenty-two stages of creation, or the twenty-two generative categories. Sometimes, for both men and women, a single ring attached to the earlobe represents the mother of the other rings (1).

[178] 1. In olden times, men and women wore cowrie shells on their ears in the place of copper rings, a custom which would seem to be still respected in certain villages today. These shells played the same part as copper.

827 19 301 776 But the role of this adornment goes much further. As symbol of the word, it is through the ornaments that the spirit Téliko, master of sound, hears what /68/ is said to man. They attract sound and send it back to Téliko and Faro, who thus judge the acts and words of men. To wear earrings did not originally mean to adorn oneself, but to hear the spirits as well as to force them to hear what was said (2). Its second effect is to embarass the liar, the bearer of false news

2. Rings placed on musical instruments have the same purpose and also symbolize those worn by men. See p. 282.

or evil words, by putting him in the position of being understood by the invisible, therefore of being judged by them. A pleasant or well-intentioned word benefits the one to whom it is addressed and this

827 191 381 776 gain is felt as a contribution to the beneficial nyama. "The spirit Téliko transforms the air emitted by the speaker into favorable nyama; upon hearing a good word, it would be necessary to stop one's ears so that this nyama does not leave the person who received it." Moreover, if a person opens his eyes wide while watching the speaker, "the latter's nyama is able to penetrate the body of the listener" and spread within it as a reviving tide. While this takes place, the good word saturates the air, helping the action of breathing, hence the life, of the listener. "One breathes," says an informant, "with the nyama of the words which enter through the eyes and ears." But this process is not one-sided. The good nyama returns to the speaker through his own eyes while he is looking at the other person. He is reflected in the person with whom he is talking and it is as though he were talking to himself. There is a beneficial exchange even when only one of the two actors speaks.

Inversely, a bad word or an insult upsets the listener and rebounds, acting upon the insulting person. This harmonious arrangement summarizes precisely and powerfully the universal movement, principle of life and strength for all beings. It comprises an individual movement provoked by the word which acts upon the body by developing and regularizing the rhythm of breathing, and a collective movement set off by the return of the word to the speaker. Because of the effect of the spoken word, exchanges are established that are favorable both to the rhythm of individual breathing and to the equilibrium of universal life. This effect is not limited to words in the strict sense; sight enjoys the same prerogatives as hearing and diction. If an object [431] belonging to a certain person is seen and coveted by another, the owner cannot refuse to give it to him. The act of seeing has established by itself, between the stranger and the object, a bond which is affectively stronger than that of ownership.

836 The articulated parts of the human body are just as meaningful as the head. The bones, more lasting than the flesh /69/ and a testimony, in the grave, of the life that has passed, are its foundation and framework.

The navel is the central point of the articulations: that is why Faro, when he drowns a person, returns the body after having slit the nose and navel. This double mutilation shows that he has reclaimed the head and the body of the guilty man. The articulations are the indication of man's condition in the new order. Where he was once

326 778 243 The lower compartment contains millet from a field called kongobwona foro, reserved for the needs of the cult of the forge. This land is placed under the guardianship of the patriarch belonging to the Gwonna family, and its upkeep is assured by the community. The seeds are given by each blacksmith to the old man who sows them himself. The work of cultivation and threshing is done communally. The millet is stored in the old man's granary and each blacksmith receives a share. This share is not eaten, but is put aside. From time to time the artisan takes a few seeds which he places as an offering on his altar, and which remain for a time in the compartment reserved for them; then they are considered to have been eaten by the axe and are removed and replaced by others. Part of the millet is kept as seed for the following year.

326 778 789 Each compartment is open and the blacksmith may insert his fingers; if his earnings are insufficient, he rubs his body and tongue with the hand which he has just dipped into the pocket containing money; the price, set by the spoken word, will not be questioned by the client. If he goes to work in his field, he places his hand into the millet each morning to draw upon the strength it contains and to improve the results of his agricultural work. If he burns himself while working at the forge, he dips his fingers into the third compartment and cools himself in Faro's water. It is this same water which a young artisan must drink at the beginning of his apprenticeship.

326 778 776 The triangular iron, farabye, which constitutes the axe proper is placed under the power of three spirits belonging to the group of air spirits: A gayru who revealed iron to men; Tengu who taught them Faro's supremacy; and Gullé. The first two are the masters of the bellows and direct the work as a whole; the third does their bidding and teaches men the technology of ironwork (1). When the owner

1. The spirit would have refused to teach the blacksmiths the working of copper and gold, as these two metals belonged to Faro who reserved for himself the right to use them. Since iron was black he had abandoned its use to the spirits of the air.

of the altar dies, the /121/ axe is removed and placed in the village sanctuary where the ancestral tools are kept. But the remaining objects are inherited by the son. [428]

The ancestors are worshipped in various places: at the doors and thresholds of houses, at the cemetery, and at stone altars placed at the intersections of lanes and in public squares. These positive cults, which are aimed at the acquisition of beneficial forces, have as a counterpart, cults in which the villagers rid themselves of all their unlucky and infectious elements; these take place, in particular, at the corssroads, dangu, which are placed under the guardianship of the earth Soba spirits.

It would be impossible to treat all of the cults of the Bambara villages. Among these, three have caught our attention; they concern the dasiri, the dangu, and the ancestral altar stones.

A. The dasiri

The word dasiri (literally, which binds the mouth) designates the invisible spirit, Faro's representative entrusted with watching over /138/ the village, as well as the seat of this spirit and, sometimes too, the animal which accompanies it or symbolizes it.

The spirit haunts a rock, a thicket, or a tree situated near the village; the approaches to this spot are reserved for the elder in charge of the ritual (1).

1. In Massala and Soroba it is a baobab tree; in Sama, a tamarind tree, etc. See the observations on the dasiri collected by Ch. Monteil, Monographie de Djenné /Monograph of Djenne/, pp. 137-138; L. Tauxier. La Religion Bambara, pp. 195-208.

Generally the place is pointed out by the geomancer at the time the village is founded, or else determined by an event which occurred at that time. It is after this operation that the buildings are erected to the west of the chosen spot.

If the dasiri is a tree, no one may burn or cut its branches. In many cases it cannot be approached by anyone dressed in black or indigo, colors which represent obscurity. No Peul may sit in its shade (2). Any infraction of these taboos brings about the death of

2. The reasons for the taboo concerning the Peul have not yet been ascertained.

794 776 778 [563]

In some villages, the sacrificer never consumes butter or milk, foods which the Peul furnish the Bambara.

the culprit and deprives the villagers of their protector.

794 776 825 The spirit of the dasiri sometimes has as its compansion an animal which seems to represent the group's ancestor. At Ségou, it is a crocodile; at Ouélenguena, a she-ass; at Koulikoro, a monkey; in other places it is a male goat which is replaced when it dies. At Konodimini there are a series of deep intercommunicating wells which would have served as homes for the ancestors. These holes are at present occupied by hyenas which are considered to be incarnations of the blacksmiths of former times and which are the dasiri of the place.

The dasiri's animal is free to enter homes and to eat what it finds. It is often fed by the inhabitants. No one may attack it and whoever breaks this taboo, set on by a vengeful nyama of which he cannot [582 626] rid himself, risks being forbidden to marry, even being no longer tolerated in his native village (1).

1. This was, at Soroba, the case of Dji Diara, who, after killing a hyena, could not marry as no woman was willing to link her destiny to his.

794 776 782 As its name indicates, the function of the dasiri is to maintain the stability and integrity of the village. It is the "support of the inhabitants' lives"; the numerous rituals (individual or collective), of which it is the object, reveal the importance of its role as well as the diversity of the beings invoked. To Faro are addressed prayers for rain; to the ancestors prayers for questions /139/ concerning the family; and to the spirit of the tree when it is a matter of stopping an epidemic. But directly or indirectly, any sacrifice offered to the dasiri is offered to Faro. The victims (sheep or fowl) and the offerings (cotton bands, kola nuts) are always white (see Pl. 3, b).

794 778 852 When children reach the age of six or seven, they are led to the tree; they sit on its roots upon which kola nut juice is spat, and are, by this fact, introduced into the village cult. They are then presented to all the allies senànku and especially to the blacksmiths with whom they proceed to joke.

794 Each year a sacrifice bringing together all the inhabitants is offered
776 to the dasiri and is terminated by communal eating of the sacrificial
782 victim. The first fruits of the harvest are also brought to it by the sacrificer.

B. The dangu

776 The crossroads dangu or danku (literally, boundary of the head) are
778 inhabited by the Soba spirits who, under Faro, constantly intervene
823 in human affairs. Everything placed at this spot belongs to them,
783 and no one passes by without leaving an offering or a token of his presence: a tool, raw cotton, seeds, cloth. A travelling stranger kneels and deposits a little ash or some cotton; if not, he cleans off a little space on which he spits before leaving. A child passing by will greet it with these words: "Crossroads, my soul is in your hands." On the occasion of any event concerning the individual, the family, or the community, red kola nuts are placed at the crossroads and the following words uttered: "You, crossroads, I entrust my head to you; you are my support; I say, you, crossroads" (1).

1. E dangu m be ni ku kalifa, do i la ni jigi be fe, ngo e dangu.

The corssroad, as an ideal public thoroughfare, is the chosen spot where one easily rids oneself of the nyama which any individual keeps and carries about with him. All that is impure, unlucky, and undesirable for the individual or the community is left at the crossroads. Objects which have belonged to dead people are also left there. The forces which are thus gotten rid of are supposedly absorbed by the spirits for whom they constitute a kind of nourishment which will then be returned to men in the form of gifts free of any taint. (2)

2. See p. 258.

/140/ Several examples will illustrate the role played by the crossroads in the community:

Any man who has wounded an animal or squashed an insect is affected in his own tere by that of the victim. He goes to the crossroads, kneels, and prays, depositing at the same time a band of cotton, an egg, and ashes. The band of woven cotton, symbol of

776 778 823 783

the word, is offered as clothing, and the eggs are offered as purification. As for the ashes, it is the ideal pure element since fire has "removed" its tere from the wood; here it represents the man from whom "the bad force acting on his tere has been removed" (1). Whoever murders an

1. See pp. 90 ff.

animal proceeds in the samw way with the animal's hide upon which he throws cowrie shells. In both cases, the spirits absorb the tere and nyama, which add to their own forces and free the culprit.

Collective purifications are carried out on the dangu when sexual taboos regarding cultivated fields and bush are broken. The impurity [833] resulting from copulation performed outdoors is communicated to all the land belonging to the village; the trees in the bush will no longer bear fruit; the harvests will deteriorate. Formerly the two lovers [684] taken by surprise were deprived of their clothing which was burned on the dangu after they had circled the village three times starting at the left. The culprits were then banished. At present, if the plight of the fields suggests that such an act has been committed, all varieties of cultivated seeds are gathered in a basket which is placed at the cross-roads. Then, all the villagers and their domestic animals circle the village three times while sham battles take place between men mounted on horseback. After a sacrifice offered at the dangu, the seeds, thus purified, are sown.

776 778 823 241

Offerings are made to the spirits of the crossroads at the time of sowing to invoke their protection. This ritual is obligatory for whomever sows cotton, since this seed was given to men by these spirits. The farmer places the seeds, sits down facing west, and cries out three times the name of the dangu above the seeds. He leaves three small piles in homage to the spirit along with fibers from the plant, and kills a victim before proceeding to sow his field. When the stalks are up, he cuts some boughs and returns to the place of sacrifice to sweep up the seeds, thus impregnating them with the nyama of the dangu. He then dries them, grinds, sifts, and mixes them with earth picked up on the same spot. In his field, he shouts /141/ the name of the dangu and throws the mixture with all his strength in the direction of the cardinal points, the zenith, and the ground. When the plants are mature he picks the first seven ripe seeds, brings them to the same place, and offers a sacrifice of thanksgiving.

776 It is also at the crossroads that the elders place the child whose
778 legitimacy is in doubt. If the diviner who is then consulted declares
823 that the child is a bastard, he is deprived of the protection of the spirits
848 and is supposedly unable to survive the nyama which he has acquired
787 at the place. In this same spot are buried abnormal children, in par-
[766] ticular hydrocephalics who are considered undesirable. The spindle of a dead woman is placed here along with the broom she habitually used.

776 But the ritual most characteristic of the crossroads is the one re-
778 sorted to by the village when it is in trouble: the primitive wooden
823 mallet, gosilande is planted in the ground; it is then struck with a
783 stalk of millet to chase away evil and to induce new techniques of reparation to come out of the instrument (1).

1. See p. 145.

C. Stone Altars

778 In the villages, at the intersections of lanes, and in the squares,
211 the founding ancestors are represented by stones under which various objects are buried (see Pl. V, b).

At Sama, four large stones, encased in a clay platform, symbolize both the cardinal points and the ancestors. They are in touch with the dasiri and receive the same offerings. At Banankoroni, the fara ba is partly buried. Under its point is an albino skull which represents those of the first ancestors and their bones. Two hoes, one placed near the right ear and the other near the left ear, convey the idea that "the man who cultivates the earth will never hear a humiliating word." Under the chin, another hoe recalls that the villagers who are faithful to agriculture will never know famine. Under the hoe, a siriku (2) protects them against those who try to harm them, and brings them

2. See p. 179, n. 1.

"the hyena's luck"; it also means that some of their ancestors were transformed into hyenas in former times. A circumcision knife recalls that all males are circumcised, and all women excised (Fig. 15). Finally, three albino bones and a small pile of copper are a testimony to /142/ Faro's presence and power. Drawings are made on these

794 For male members, the large dyo, the principal aim of which is the preservation of spiritual forces and the maintenance of the person in daily life, are the Komo, the Kworè, the Nama, the Kono, the Nago, and the Nya. Women are grouped around muso dyo, about which little information has been obtained. The uncircumcised belong to the ndomo (or ɛeble). In addition, members of these societies are divided into groups which may be independent of age grades and which are designated by signs.

The Komo

The word Komo indicates the complex theoretically made up in each village of society members, living and dead, the sanctuary and its altars (boli), the responsible chief, and the mask. It is dominated and protected by the invisible power of Faro and by the presence of a particular spirit to which it is consecrated. The latter haunts a tree located in the thicket where the ceremonies take place. He is /143/ respected for having taught in ancient times the origin and role of the boli and the variations of the cult; he comes to slake his thirst on the blood of victims.

[776]

The Komo is as powerful as it is old. The terms trodeni (ni, small) and tro ba (ba, big) are given to it, depending upon how ancient it is. Each Komo has, in addition, a particular name (1). The Komo

1. According to native etymology, komo means "taking (mo) of the pond (ko)." According to L. Tauxier, "Komo in Bambara means bad, mean, difficult" (see the Dictionnaire bambara-français of Mgr. Bazin, p. 308). On the root Ko or Kon see M. Delafosse, "Terminologie religieuse au Soudan /Religious Terminology in the Sudan/" l'Anthropologie, December, 1923, quoted by L. Tauxier. Some observations concerning the composition and functioning of the Komo society have been the object of a chapter of L. Tauxier in the Religion Bambara, pp. 272-310, which quotes works published by Ch. Monteil and the Abbe Henry. See also: Moussa Travélé, "Le Komo ou Koma /The Komo

69 2. M fa faro n so ma bana a dyanza ye kle saba kono ye; ni ye se i ka seki, muso kono ma.

The offering of food is then renewed every three days until a birth brings about the return of the double into the world of the living.

If the dead man has no descendants, his altar remains forever in the sanctuary of the Komo near the nimara boli. Otherwise, it is returned within seven days to the eldest son or to the brother who then becomes the head of the family.

769 During the night following the seventh day, the soul returns to eat
775 and drink in the hut of the widow who lives alone. All the dishes containing water or food are therefore carefully emptied and cleaned. The same meal is offered to the deceased the night following the fortieth day after the death. The widow comes out of her house on the [765] eighth day if she is poor and must work for a living; otherwise, on the forty-first day.

At the end of a variable period of time, the soul, the double, and the name of the deceased are received by a child who is born into the family. The exuvia, mana or folo of the soul, remains in the sanctuary of the Komo as a permanent testimony to his existence on earth. It is conserved by Faro who watches over it, and maintained by the offerings of the living who will in this way bring it to the final resurrection.

When the deceased does not belong to the Komo society, the rites are celebrated over the altars of the societies to which he belongs; his soul is likewise conserved by them. The spiritual principles /195/ of the women, grouped in institutions comparable to those of men, called muso dye, are the object of the same attentions in which is found the rhythm of four days, the female number.

766 If the deceased was too poor for all the rituals, which are always costly, to be observed, two gourds of water are prepared and placed one at the head, the other at the feet of the corpse; he is then lifted in such a way that his image is reflected in the water. This accomplished, eight cowrie shells are placed at his head and eight at his feet and the gourds are covered with a winnowing tray; the image thus conserved is supposedly reflected in the kaba mana, the fourth sky, where Faro, 776 symbolized by the cowrie shells, passes judgment on its state of purity.
787 A divining rite is then performed. If the man is pure, the villagers

attend his burial despite the fact that the rituals have not been performed. If not, he is abandoned to the care of his family.

To neglect the rituals assuring life in the beyond and the security of the living causes the shadow su dya, or the ghost su kere dye (literally, white side of the dead man), to arise and present itself under the same which the dead man had on earth, to claim his due from his descendants.

Ancestor Cult

In the entryway of some residences a supporting stake (cɛ dloma), sometimes marked by seven notches, represents the founding ancestor of the family. On the anniversary of his death the stake is oiled "to refresh his soul." In addition, each year the owner of the house sacrifices to all the ancestors on the family altar, on the stake, and on the threshold of the door. In some villages the ancestors are called upon by tapping the threshold with a little wooden hammer, dyele kala ni, which represents them.

In the courtyards, pieces of wood stuck in the ground (jigi semen dloma) represent the paternal uncle, the brother of the founder, and are used as seats for the heads of families who lean against them "in order to lean well upon the traditions." Farmers, before leaving for the fields, rub their hoes on them to show them to the ancestors.

Before planting the women give the head of the family a ball of raw millet, which he lines up to represent the dead according to age and rank. Then he gives them a pinch of the seed beginning with the one representing the most recent deceased and calling successively all the dead by name. The paste and the seeds are then put in water and the mash thus obtained is poured on the /196/ doorposts to the entryway of the family house upon which the blood of a sacrificial victim also is poured. When the planting time comes, the chief who has prepared the mash made with a few grains taken from the seeds distributes this to the women, beginning with the one who represents the oldest deceased. He asks the ancestors to watch over, during the germination period, the soul of the millet which will descend into the seed with the first rainfall. When the millet has reached maturity, the first seeds harvested are placed in a pot on the threshing floor where the grain will be threshed later, and are distributed to the women in the same manner as the time of planting, the oldest of the deceased having to receive the first of the seed.

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1. Among others J. Toutain, C. R. des Garnered Shelves de J. Frazer /Report on the Garnered Shelves by J. Frazer/.

concerning the absence of historical documents and the difference in periods. To admit these postulates, it is necessary to prove precisely this absence and also the incapability of oral tradition to keep alive the traditions and ways of viewing the world over long periods of time.

In any event, whatever the opinion adopted, it would be good methodology to admit as an immediate hypothesis the probable or possible role played by the Sudanese world as a preserver or transformer of attitudes, rites, and concepts which scholars find everywhere else but which remain unexplained. For in a few years nothing will remain to be either disclaimed or confirmed concerning these systems which are on their way to rapid disintegration. Because of mechanization and an unconscious wish for self destruction the Black civilizations will soon become only a shadow of their former selves and the instability of their material will not allow them to be reconstituted in their complexity and grandeur.

And whatever the fate of this hypothesis, we may find, as a result of such thinking that the religious thought of the Blacks, whether original or not, will take its place in the philosophy of history and in the history of humanity.

/231/ ADDENDA

000 The research conducted in the field during the publishing of the present work has brought to light the following facts which, we believe, it will be useful to present succinctly to the reader.

Chapter 1

776 825 Because of the loss of the seeds in their collarbones, Pemba and Mousso Koroni actually have an animal aspect which they owe to their impurity as well as to that of the uncultivated earth which they symbolize. Pemba is represented by the warableni (Vulpes pallida) and Mousso Koroni by the kongowuluni (unidentified fox). It is this

776 825 latter animal which is imitated by the vukuri during the children's nocturnal ritual described on page 65.

This new information confirms the observations noted on page 47, footnote 1, concerning the identity of the Bambara and Dogon representations. Moreover, the warableni, like the yurugu (Vulpes pallida) of the Dogon, intervenes in divination, particularly in geomancy. The investigations permit the extension of these representations to Sudanese tribes coming from Mandé (see p. 2), particularly, to the Bozo and the Peul.

Chapter 3

826 773 824 All Sudanese peoples originating in Mandé are characterized by the seeds (or fish) contained in their collarbone, these varying from one tribe to another. On the other hand, within a tribe, the theoretical content of the eight seeds, though roughly similar in terminology, differs in arrangement from family to family. Also the positions of the first and last seeds are reversed for men and women. Example: the blacksmiths have as their first seed the keninge and as their last the tikaninkuru, whereas the potters have as their first seed the tikaninkuru which they cultivate in the sacred fields (see p. 170) and as their last the keninge.

Moreover, after Mousso Koroni had stolen from Pemba the seeds he was entrusted to give on earth, Faro, through the intermediary of the /232/ animals who ate them at his order, reclaimed them from her; thus purified, he distributed them to men. The animal, which brought back to Faro the essential seed of each family, becomes the taboo, tne, of the family concerned, and the breaking of this taboo has the basic effect of removing the content of the culprit's collarbone. Analogous representations are noted among the Dogon.

Totemism, the so called "joking relationship" (senankuya of the Bambara), the caste system, and the exogamous laws of the Sudanese are based on the elements and classification of the contents of the collarbone.

Chapter 6

794 857 772 All the great adult institutions (dyo) are in contact with the children's society of the Ndomo which reflects the universal organization

776 drink, dress themselves, wear adornments, etc. -- in short, behave exactly like living men.

812 [125] All peoples use or have used such language in trying to express a concept which is by its nature impossible to make concrete. It is, therefore, perhaps premature to conclude that a Bambara cannot conceive of a strictly immaterial world for his manes. He is merely at present incapable of giving a description unencumbered with concrete terms in habitual use. However, it may be stated in general that the Bambara does not trouble himself about the why or how of things outside of what he sees or knows. Reality surrounds him and limits him. He makes decisions on the spur of the moment and also under the influence of time-honored empiricism which is the basis of custom.

776 We have pointed out that among the incorporeal souls are some who, through the right efforts, rise to such heights that they can enter the world of spirits. There are spirits, indeed, who have nothing of the human about them. What are their origin and nature? The Bambara say of them: ma si fa do, meaning "It is a kind of person." Here, too, the expression betrays the thought. Aside from the fact that the native vocabulary does not provide for expressions strictly immaterial, the Bambara has an inevitable tendency to use himself as an object of comparison. For him, the world of the spirits like that of the manes, is analogous to our own. But the manner in which he speaks of the spirits contradicts his words. A spirit is invisible, without a material body; if it appears, it does so under the most diverse forms, borrowed for a brief time. A spirit is often called "a wind," meaning "a fluid." It is also a weightless substance, so rarefied that it can go anywhere -- even to entering a living man's body, where it can perform all sorts of fantastic things (1).

1. See Chapter 7.

For the Bambara, most spirits remain in this vague and inconsistent state. Only events, circumstances or the native's will occasionally tear some of them away from this chaos and transports them to the worldly scene (2). We shall speak of them

2. Assuming for these and other similar

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terms the same meaning of supernatural forces.

again in the chapter on brotherhoods.

[126] Spirits, genii and gods (1) known to the Bambara

1. See on p. 123 the tradition about the horse Kori who was the husband of a mabo woman.

may be divided into three classes:

First, manes who have become spirits. These are of ten wandering and ill-disposed spirits. That is why the word nyama, to which we have alluded, is often used in a pejorative sense. It is also perhaps believed -- by analogy again -- that some manes can become so perfect in evil that they become true evil spirits, just as others become, if not actually good spirits, at least indifferent ones.

A second category comprises genii of the place or gods of the earth (nyana dugu-da-siri). There is not a single spot that [823] is inhabited, cultivated, populated or, on the other hand, isolated and deserted that does not have its genie. However, only some of these genii have an organized cult. They are usually the protectors of those who inhabit, cultivate, frequent or visit the places in question, provided that they are suitably honored. They often reveal their presence by entering into direct relations with someone who is in their vicinity and telling him how they wish to be honored in exchange for protection (2); on other oc-

2. See the story about the genie who revealed himself to Kolé (p. 51).

casions they are only discovered by a "seer." In any event, the genie of a place has complete possession of whatever is in the place, and man can profit in one way or another only in accordance with his pact with the genie. In principle he has only a simple right of usufruct, different from and more extensive than our right.

776 The third class comprises the enormous throng of genii of all sorts included under the vague and general term of nyana (3).

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3. One also hears the word nyena. I do not think that this is a corruption of the Arab word jinn. In the first place, it was not Islam that introduced the concept to the Bambara, since it is common to all Blacks. Further, the word nyana is connected with a root nya meaning "powerful," "lord," "master," and nyena is only a dialectal variant.

The nyana may be divided into two categories: the [127] wandering and the solitary, for whom no permanent or formal cult is provided. They live pretty much anywhere. Some have a marked preference for being near men, for crossroads or for the vicinity of wells or springs. They also wander, invisible and ready for pranks, in the courtyards of houses where during the night they love to roam among the kitchen-ware. It is said that they put unclean things into the pots unless one has been careful to turn them upside down. It is even said that if any woman is so imprudent as to use a pot in which one of these wandering spirits has urinated, she will give birth to a sorcerer.

Others of these cult-less spirits throng the countryside and are the terror of travelers (1). Everyone has heard of Wokolo: a

1. They can assume any form they like and take part in the life of humans under the most diverse forms. See p. 123 for the horse Kori.

little black, hairy hunter who likes to live in the trees, along the paths and also in the brush, beside creeks. Others say that he likes to live in the si (Bassia Parkii) which we call the butter tree or karite. In any case one cannot escape his sharp arrows except

776 by greeting him as soon as he is observed; if he is unarmed, the best thing to do is to jump on him and rain so many blows on him that he loses count. Then one can escape while he is still knocked out.

794 The second category of nyana includes a motley array of spirits, all of whom have cults. The outward manifestations of these cults have struck anyone traveling in the country, and under their apparent diversity there are recognizable general traits. All are magic practices intended to make the spirits serve man's will. By this means, man tries to make use of supernatural forces of the same nature as those whose unfavorable action he fears. He resorts to the invisible for weapons of defense and of attack. However, these practices must never go beyond certain limits, which are not too well-defined, if they are to be legitimate. Beyond these limits it becomes illicit magic or sorcery, which is especially feared and, whenever possible, relentlessly punished (2).

2. See Chapter 7 on the suba.

[128] In reality, the whole mass of these facts is extremely confused. The licit and the illicit are intertwined to the point where they cannot be disentangled. However, there are perfectly clear cases where there seems to be no doubt about the distinction; but there are all possible gradations between strictly magic practices and unadulterated sorcery.

Theoretically, the nyana are all-powerful and are honored the more in proportion to these powers, since, in general, it is their malevolent side that earns them their reputation. Homage is paid to them much more out of fear and terror than because of the kindness sometimes attributed to them. What a Bambara wants of them is the dyigi-seme, or "powerful master," who will protect him against everything and everyone and, if need be, help him against his enemies or give him the means of succeeding in some evil project.

A belief in a master of the universe exists among the Bambara, but the belief has borrowed from Islam a degree of

precision of which the native substratum seems unaware. In any event, there is no Bambara word for "God" except the one brought by the Moslems -- "Allah," pronounced as Ngala. This lack of a Bambara word may be explained by their custom of avoiding pronouncing the name of powerful people for fear of incurring their wrath.

There is no superior spirit of evil: Seïtane [Satan] is likewise a Moslem introduction. The Bambara does not visualize a hierarchy of spirits.

Finally, it must be concluded, from the existence of many magic practices, that there is a belief in a kind of universal energy, which is diffuse by nature and which, by appropriate means, one can capture and use as one likes. Certain genii or gods are merely emanations of this invisible, imponderable and active force, which no obstacle can stop and which can instantly overcome space and strike at a distance. This is the basis of all native magic.

[129] 2. Morality and Customs

When, as among Catholics and Moslems, the after-life is believed to be influenced by one's conduct in this life, there is a rule which determines what is and what is not proper if one wishes to earn the greatest possible rewards in the life to come. The saints and pious men have shown the way to this end.

For the Bambara, however, the next life is merely a continuation of this one and he does not think that he can, by conduct, improve his chances in the next life since it offers no rewards or punishments for his day-by-day actions. Neither his manes nor his genii give him an example of conduct to guide him. Therefore, without thought of the future, he goes along solely concerned with the present; he seeks what will give him pleasure, tries to avoid what seems harmful, and all this in a groping way, as one walks in the dark.

Sometimes, it is true, he is led to behave with a degree of decency and to avoid certain too shocking lapses, which would expose him to reproach, alienate his friends and create for him

769 As a substitute for the chicken, it is very common to
782 offer some dege, a bit of millet coarsely ground and thrown in a little water. The fa keeps this liquid in a small gourd. It is perhaps [182] reasonable to think that this is the most ancient manner of honoring the dead and, in particular, calling for their protection in obtaining the two essentials of life: grain and water.

[273] An equally common libation is made with dlo, a kind of millet beer which every Bambara enjoys drinking to the point of intoxication. The dead could hardly fail to be pleased with an offering of what they had enjoyed so much on earth!

[276] One must conclude, too, that offerings of kola nuts please the dead because it gives them a chance to enjoy a favorite treat. The officiator chews the kola nut and then spits out his saliva mixed with the juice and remains along the walls of the blon'.

Such are the ordinary offerings, but on special occasions the quantity and importance of the gifts are increased according to the desired results. When many people are present and the [781] house is prosperous, the victims are oxen and sheep. It should not be forgotten that the flesh of these consecrated victims, eaten in common, makes a very strong mystical bond between the participants; it is a true communion. It is generally conceded that the bond created by drinking consecrated liquids together is much less strong.

●776 In addition to his ancestors, every Bambara has as his
778 special protector, one of those gods (nyana) which are created wholly by the work of the magician. Every family has one or more nyana, whose priest is the fa. The boli, the symbol and altar of this type of divinity, is usually hidden from the uninitiated; it is put into a leather or canvas sack, a gourd, or a pot. The nyana of Sounsan, the ancestor of the Massa-si, was a n-ko whose boli was kept in a monkey skin. The boli is taken out of its cover so that libations can be poured over it and animal remains smeared on it. If there is some objection to exposing it, the offering is put on the cover.

769 Everything that takes place relative to the cult of the
794 nyana is analogous to that described for the cult of the ancestors.

562 583 inevitably leave the community, she can never claim any authority. Thus condemned to perpetual powerlessness, a woman never has the right to any position other than an inferior one in native society. Motives based on interest or affection may modify her situation more or less to her advantage, but they will not change her basic rights, which are at the root of all disputes about women, between spouses or between communities.

II. The Community of Property

421 What is the property of which the patrimony is composed?

It is impossible to provide a detailed list, which would, in any case, he endless. Nor should we limit ourselves to the definitions of our legal system, which are too narrow. From the native point of view, patrimonial property [187] may be divided into three principal categories.

[T16] First, there are the gods; the manes, or souls of the ancestral protectors of the family; and the nyana, the gods created by the magician. Some of them protect only the community, while others are also concerned with other collectivities. Finally, there are the innumerable magic weapons, which are gods of a sort. In the discussion of the duties of the fa, I spoke of these gods, and they are also mentioned in other parts of this work.

421 424 A second category of property is made up of the reciprocal rights of the community and its members, on the one hand, and of the community and similar collectivities, on the other. I have just explained the first, and the second will be dealt with later in the chapter under the heading "Relations between Communities."

421 422 423 Finally, all the things that are particularly valued make up the third category: gold; cattle and sheep; grain; agricultural, industrial, and commercial products of all kinds; dwellings; etc. Three points related to this last category require special consideration: agrarian usufruct, conjugal usufruct, and slaves.

596 This conjugal union differs clearly from [227] ordinary
614 forms of marriage. In view of the fact that the husband gets a
621 wife without paying a bride price for her, the wife is not given
583 in usufruct, and therefore she must be treated with the greatest consideration or she may be taken back. The situation can only be normalized if the husband is rich enough to present to the donor a gift equal to or preferably, if possible, greater than the dowry brought by the wife, or he may give a similar gift to the wife (1).

1. Such property is the wife's paraphernalia.

In these situations also, the procedure varies a great deal. The donor may offer a girl from another community and provide her with a dowry. This is what Biton did in order to bind Ngolo to him: Biton gave him a girl designated by the marabouts as one of the elect, and he also provided the girl with a rich dowry.

The significance of such alliances can be estimated only when one has some knowledge of the intentions of the parties involved, especially those of the donor. We shall see one important type in the chapter on Islam, the marriage of Allah.

IV. The common cult (2). The territorial community.

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2. Communities may be united under the protection of the same god. Here we shall study only their union under the protection of the "genie, master of the earth" (nyana dugu-da-siri). Other common cults will be studied in the following chapter, "Brotherhoods."

In the mind of the Bambara, the earth, together with everything in it, is the property of the spirits. As a result, no one may make use of it or presume to settle on or cultivate an unused field without first going through certain ceremonies.

For this purpose, either on his own responsibility or, more often, with the aid of "the one who knows" (don-na-ba), a

311 Bambara seeks the "genie, master of the earth" (nyana dugu-da-
621 siri) or, more exactly, determines where this genie dwells. It
776 may be a spring, a hill, or a rock; often it is a fine tree, in-
794 variably surrounded by a grove or at least with a grove nearby. Then, always following the same procedure, he finds out the conditions under which the genie will allow someone to settle in his domain in order to live there and cultivate the lands. Thus, a contract is worked out which governs the man's exploitation of the genie's territorial domain. As a result, provided he worships the genie in the manner required, the man [228] will be able to work under the protection of the god. Anyone who has had a share in the contract, even if only through representatives, will likewise profit if he scrupulously observes the conditions.

621 The establishment of a village requires the cooperation of
622 several communities, each represented by its fa. One of these fa
793 will either appropriate the leadership or be chosen as the rep-
794 resentative or chief of the others. Sometimes he may be merely primus inter pares; otherwise he may have managed to have his primacy conceded by the rest. It is this chief who treats with the genie in the name of the whole village; thus, he becomes the "high priest of the genie" (nyana-n-son-na-ba) with the essential function of "making the offerings" (son') required by the cult. Furthermore, he administers the earthly domain of the genie and is therefore called dugu-tigi (master of the earth).

To the nyana dugu-da-siri is usually attributed the same dyamu as that of its high priest, just as though the genie belonged to the spiritual family of the priest. This is a result consistent with the mentality of the Bambara.

621 The same mental state accounts for the custom in certain
776 villages of dedicating a living animal, often a ram, to the
778 nyana dugu-da-siri and believing it to be the god's mount. The
[825] animal is allowed to wander freely about the village, and its mischief is never punished; indeed, the people enjoy caressing and indulging it. The animal takes on some of the attributes of the genie and is, as it were, endowed with certain supernatural virtues, so only good can come from contact with it.

621 Theoretically, each settlement has only one genie, but
776 actually it may have several, especially if it has been settled by

621 successive groups, each recognizing a genie-protector. In that
776 case, the genie first recognized and worshiped takes precedence over the others. In any case, social life requires each segment to respect the gods of its neighbors, and this respect carries with it a certain amount of superstitious fear.

311 It is evident from the foregoing that occupying and
621 cultivating land poses certain problems for the settlement bene-
794 fited, and these may be grouped under three heads: the cult of the genie-protector; the exploitation of the land; and the organization of the territorial community.

793 The cult. This is mainly supported by the high priest,
794 whose principal duty is to "make the offerings" (son') to the "genie" [229] (nyana), hence his title nyana-son-na-ba. He is assisted by the council of fa, one of whom, the syere (follower), may replace him in case of need. The office of high priest is for life and is inherited in the same way as his faya. This continuity shows that the genie is actually regarded as a kind of spiritual ancestor of the priest, as we have seen from the fact that it is given the same dyamu as its high priest.

794 The cult ceremonies are very simple. They consist of
796 offerings made by the high priest, who at the same time indicates to the genie the purpose for which they are being made. The most solemn ceremonies take place when millet is sown and harvested. For these occasions, every worshiper is expected to bring a contribution in proportion to his resources. The kind of gift is not specified; everyone brings whatever he can or whatever he wishes, usually animals (sheep, beef, fowl, etc.), grain, and especially millet beer (dlo).

782 During these general gatherings, from which no one is
796 excluded, only the high priest and the members of the council
778 enter the sacred grove or approach the genie's abode. There, the high priest makes known the purpose of the sacrifice: to thank the genie for his past favors; to offer him the gifts brought by everyone; and to ask him to continue to protect the community so that its prosperity may be assured. Then the victims are sacrificed, and their blood is sprinkled on the tree trunk or whatever object or place is reputed to be the home of the genie.

Nyana

794 776 Each brotherhood is founded on the cult of a spirit (nyana). What we call "spirit" to indicate its immateriality, the Bambara from another point of view calls "power," "master," "lord", etc., for such is the meaning of the words nya, nyana, nama, dyara, komo, faro, etc., by which he designates the innumerable "gods" of his pantheon, thus affirming his subjection to this invisible restraint upon him.

It is the magician who creates the nyana of the boli worshiped by the brotherhoods with which we are here concerned. His incantations call up a kind of echo from the invisible; his persistent and peremptory practices produce a sort of personification of his desire in the depths of the universal and diffuse energy, because he "names" the thing he wants. The nyana thus created, which he attracted by "naming" it, is retained by offerings and sacrifices, just as a person is seduced by presents. Finally, he forges a link with the nyana through communion. From that point on creature and creator are [253] so closely bound to each other that neither can refuse anything to the other; they form a single being whose visible aspect is completed by the invisible.

Judging from statements, concepts, and practices, this is the native belief as to the mysterious work of the magician. The latter creates as many nyana as he likes, and he draws at will on the invisible which he fashions and rules.

Boli

794 778 Mankind in general and the native in particular need to give material support to their speculations. The magician and the believer alike need to have at hand the nyana, this essence which is personified by being "named." Appropriate procedures make the nyana come to that altar which at the same time is its symbol and which the Bambara call boli (1).

1. Otherwise known as buri. It should be noted that in ordinary language the

794 778 "After the creation came the consecration. The Kouroubari and the leaders of the people witnessed it. A white ox, a red ox, and a red rooster were sacrificed for the occasion (2)."

2. Raffenel, Nouveau voyage au Pays des Nègres [New Journey to the Country of the Negroes], Vol. 1, p. 237.

The boli is usually hidden from the uninitiated; it is put in a sack or other receptacle, and except during ceremonies it [346] is stored with other cult objects in a kind of temple often resembling a miniature native hut and called nyana-bon', "hut of the nyana."

[776] Obviously there are differences between the various nyana, because peculiar practices call up unlike spirits. In any event, however, the captive spirit is, as it were, a slave of the magician, who treats it as such and even sells it, along with instructions for its use. There are magicians who go from place to place, making and selling nyana and other magic weapons, and [443] there are recognized markets where one can always [256] obtain the boli of the most popular nyana. The markets at Bélédougou, Bendougou, and Follona are especially well known.

Trade in Boli

794 778 438 The chronicle of Ségou tells that Biton, the founder of the empire, acquired his principal idols in the Bendougou region where the popular markets of Moribala, Kourbadougou, and Diali are located.

Itinerant merchants deal in all sorts of cult objects, and there are settled traders who are sometimes very well known, like a certain Minkoli who made boli and was so famous that his village is named after him: Minkoli ka dugu (village of Minkoli). I have never been able to find out, however, which village in the Bendougou area was the home of the famous Minkoli.

By such means the cult of a given nyana, once it has been created, spreads to some extent, depending on the degree

to which its creator chooses to reveal the ritual of initiation.

The head of a family, just like an isolated individual or the head of a large community, will not fail to acquire, for a monetary consideration, exclusive possession of one of these powerful boli, which becomes his personal protector. Sounsan, the ancestor of the Massa-si, had with him the nyana n-Ka; Biton, the founder of the empire of Ségou, possessed several famous nyana: na n-Golo-ko (1), Nye-n-dinge du (2), and ba Kung-o-ba (3). Generally speaking, these private cults cannot spread,

1. Literally, na-n-Goloko, "the mother concerned with birth" or, freely translated, "the goddess who presides at birth."

2. Nye dinge du, "the deep orbit of the eye."

3. Ba-kung-o-ba, "mother of the great bush."

but when their possessor becomes a powerful chief, they migrate rapidly. This is what happened to Biton's cults; his followers took up the worship of his idols.

When an individual becomes the acknowledged possessor of a nyana the result is an alliance with this nyana, which in the native language is called furu, the same word as that used for the conjugal union of a man and a woman. Indeed, the installation of a renowned nyana in its master's village gives rise to rejoicing [257] similar to that occasioned by a wedding; hence, the following expressions: a ye boli furu, "he is united with a boli"; a ye boh' furu gosi, "he has effected a union with a boli"; a-ta boli konyo kera, "he has celebrated the wedding of his boli." On the day of such festivals, the master of the nyana (nyana-tigi or boli-tigi, surrounded by his acolytes, offers dlo to his guests who have come to greet him and give him presents. At nightfall, when the uninitiated have withdrawn, the clergy and the adepts in a procession take the boli to the "sacred wood" where the first cult ceremony is held, characterized principally by dancing and singing.

794 [292] Some of the clergy use a disguise when officiating in public; furthermore, the ceremonies are held only at night.

[198] Finally, in the presence of the profane, the initiated use a special language for everything referring specifically to the cult. The greatest secret of all is the name of the nyana, [551] because anyone who knows the name has complete power over the spirit it designates.

797 298 From the point of view of the disguised clerical body, this secrecy is virtually impenetrable. A disguised person loses his human personality and is withdrawn from the natural world. It is an accepted fact that it is dangerous for those not affiliated to intercept his glance through the tiny openings in the mask; undoubtedly his person on that occasion is impregnated with a fluid whose emanations are fatal to those who, not being affiliated, are unprotected against them.

Some of these disguises include a headdress or mask and for the body a kind of costume usually made of long strips of vegetal material; is this, as has been suggested, simply a means of dominating the herd of adepts and even more the profane through the terror such regalia inspires when seen at night by the flickering light of torches and bonfires? It seems more probable that one must put this matter on the plane of the supernatural in order to understand it. Dangerous wild animals [825 ● 772] are believed to be incarnations of evil and powerful gods, and an attempt is made to present an outward appearance consistent with the terror merely seeing them inspires, in order thereby to acquire the supernatural qualities that characterize them (1).

1. There is no doubt that some individuals, under the influence of the role of wild beast that they are portraying, have been led to commit actual murders during ritual observances. I have often heard this asserted in connection with the dyara (lion).

794 782 It should be noted that the costume, gestures, [259] dances, songs, and music of the dye-n-fa and their acolytes

The Operation of the Brotherhood

794 A brotherhood is a spiritual family whose internal affairs are conducted like those of a community with natural filiation. The nyana-tigi has the role of fa, and the assemblage of dye-n-fa-u, reinforced by the initiated and the leading believers, serve as the community council. Thus, questions confined to the cult and to administrative matters are dealt with by the nyana-tigi acting alone or with his council, just like the fa in the community. Therefore, the description of the latter's duties which has been given above will suffice to explain by analogy the practices in the brotherhoods. There are, however, certain details peculiar to the brotherhoods, and these will be set forth in what follows.

The Cult

794 The cult is made public during certain ceremonies, of
786 which the two most important are the one at the time of sowing and the other at the time of harvest. It is accepted as fact in the brotherhoods that at planting time the boli copulate so as to produce issue at the time of harvest, hence the hymn to Nama which says: "boli fyerela ka den' (the boli has flowered to bring forth fruit)." These ceremonies are accompanied by orgies [262] during which the celebrants, both men and women, are said to indulge in sexual licentiousness. It may be concluded from these two series of happenings that the rites seek by appropriate mimicry to encourage the fruitfulness of nature.

794 There are other indications which show that it is indeed
• 776 toward nature that the rites are directed. In certain brother-
825 hoods, notably the Kore, the costumed officiants who farm the cartege pretend to be wara-u (wild beasts), suruku-u (hyenas), golo-u (monkeys), and other terrifying inhabitants of the bush (1).

1. They are all called wara or sogo, terms used for all wild animals. It should be noted that every nyana is called wara (power, lord).

794 It is not rash to suppose that in this case they are symbolizing
776 the role, probably primordial and in any event primary, of
825 the nyana to control the supernatural and particularly malevolent forces of the bush. As a matter of fact, the most popular and important nyana are the protectors of the harvests which represent virtually the only property of the natives. One of the nyana is even especially concerned with agricultural work (2);

[461]

2. In the native vocabulary, "to work" (tya-ke, short for tyi-ya-ke) primarily means "to work in the fields."

this is Tyi^wara (god of agricultural work), who presides over the first clearing of the land at the beginning of the winter season.

In any case, whether the animal is regarded as the visible form of a spirit or, if one prefers, the perceptible manifestation of a supernatural force, the belief is strengthened by the common practice of the interdict (tne) and, still more, by the magical acts required of a hunter.

Another aspect of this belief is seen in the choice of an animal to represent the mount of the nyana dugu-da-siri.

794 It is for a similar reason that the brotherhoods usually
825 adopt the name of an animal: for the Nama this is usually the hyena (suruku) (3); for the Komo, the hyena (suruku) or the

[552]

3. The hyena is often designated by the words nama-koro (old Nama) or suya-koro (old sorcerer) when the speaker does not want to use the animal's real name (suruku). There is a whole vocabulary for use to "avoid" the names that are dangerous to utter, and the name of the hyena is one of them.

elephant (sama); for the Dyara, the lion; for the Kono, the ostrich (kono-ba), etc. It is said that the cries, the shouts, and

794 clergy. On the other hand, an innocent man will be over-
696 whelmed by mental and physical torture if he is unable to give his executioners what they demand.

681 Corporal punishment includes flogging, chains, starvation, torture, and death by all imaginable methods. Pecuniary punishment includes fines, confiscation, and pillage. The condemned man is also sometimes forced to labor for the clergy or is even enslaved by them.

Social and Political Role of the Brotherhoods

794 By its actions, the brotherhood, an artificial family,
776 tends to take the place of the natural family whose organization
769 it has borrowed and whose cult it has banished. It is easy to account for this.

The cult of the manes is the framework of the family and of the communities derived from it. The brotherhood has cleverly managed to set up such a cult by specially honoring the manes of its high priests, its famous members, and its eminent worshipers. [267]

Gradually, the nyana dugu-da-siri, protector of the territorial community, has given way to the nyana of the boli, a more powerful god since his territory is unlimited.

It is true that in spite of everything the tradition remains, and even though they are largely over-shadowed by the nyana of the boli, the manes of the ancestors and the nyana dugu-da-siri are still venerated. Though sowing and harvesting are celebrated
731 with great pomp by the brotherhoods, still, when a disaster,
783 epidemic, or terrible drought occurs, sacrifices are promptly offered to the manes and the gods of the place. People may fear their anger, but they also have confidence in their good will, and it is felt that their severity can always be tempered. On the other hand, the nyana of the boli are supposed to be basically evil, and their worship seems intended to ward off their malignity rather than to obtain their favor.

794 This duality in religion brings about extremely compli-
621 cated interrelationships which bind the communities and

614 *173 Mamari had been elected by the ton'-den'; by means of successive usurpations, whose progress we have shown, he achieved a kind of despotism whose entire gain he was unable to hand down to his descendants, in spite of his wishes.

For his descendants, election followed their installation in office by the ton'-masa, who at the same time publicly announced the assent of the furu-ba-dyon' by a symbolic gesture in which he presented himself to the new fama wearing a loincloth around his neck and put its two ends into the hands of the fama. Under the protection of the deity called ba Kongo-ba, which Mamari had bought in Bendougou, an oath was taken which formed an unbreakable bond between the two elements of the clan.

The election of Tonmassa Dembélé as fama was the result of discussions following the coup d'état which he himself carried out, and it is probable that this election, too, was followed by an oath of loyalty on the part of the dyon'-kuntigi in one or another of the ways already described.

In the case of the successors of Tonmassa Dembélé, the choice of a new chief was preceded by gatherings at which it was announced that the place was vacant and open to the person who could take over Mamari's bow and quiver. Then the election was held, and it was followed by a ritual banquet.

614 *173 782 For this banquet, an ox and a slave were ritually slaughtered in the hut used as a temple for ba Kongo-ba (1), to whom

• [776]

1. A literal translation of the name was given to me, "Mother of the Great Bush," wherein "mother" is equivalent to goddess." There is an allusion to the ceremony described here in the journal of Isaac (second voyage of Mungo Park), which uses the name Kogno-ba, a variant of Kongo-ba.

the victims were sacrificed. The corpses were then cut into pieces, cooked together, and stirred frequently to make sure that they would be well mixed. A part of this macabre dish was served in the same hut and in the same gourd to the

between Ségou-koro and Kirango was the area under what we would call direct administration, because this zone was occupied substantially by the fama, his community, and his ton'-dyon'.

Ségou-koro, which had witnessed the birth and the development of the clan, had remained Mamari's capital; he preferred to live there, and he had installed the protective idols of the clan there. Thus it was, so to speak, the seat of the brotherhood, whose four principal idols continued to be known under the names of ba Kongo-ba, na n-Golo ko, Nye-dinge-dun', and Kolo-koloni. [319]

The fama was the high priest, and the other officiants of the cult were chosen from among the ton'-dyon'; that is why Ngolo Dyara was dye-n-fa. Any follower of Mamari or his successors was affiliated with the cult of these idols. The adepts who lived far from Ségou-koro founded branches which in certain ways were so dependent on the capital that Ségou-koro was for a long time regarded as a holy city.

We have no detailed knowledge concerning the cult of these important idols; we only know that in general they did not differ greatly from what we have already said about the nyana of the boli. The annual festival was exceptionally solemn and brought the faithful from even quite distant regions. The fama, of course, presided over the ceremony which involved certain essential rites: a renewal of religious faith, the reception of new members, and an oath of loyalty to the fama.

The four deities mentioned above were not the only ones in the Bambara pantheon at Ségou (1); others were added, some

1. In Les Bambara [The Bambara], Father Henry mentions, in addition to ba Kongo-ba and na-n-Golo-ko, two other idols, Kuantara and Safolo.

bought and others invented out of the extravagant faith of the ton'-dyon'. Among the latter should no doubt be included the drums of the ton'-dyon', which are mentioned several times in the accounts and which are presented always in a very bloodthirsty light. Ngolo sacrificed his most hated enemies to the drum-idols,

beginning with his relatives, to avenge his hatred toward them for selling him into slavery. It seems likely that the establishment of these ferocious deities may well date from the time of this despot and perhaps was due to his personal initiative.

The "people of Ségou" also held in high esteem the deities of the people they conquered. Indeed, there is no doubt that they constituted the most precious part of the booty of war. The Toucouleur [Tukolor] relate that when they entered Ségou-Sikoro they found an idol in chains; it was the protective deity of a group of the Nono-n-kobe people of the cliff of Bandiagara. With the evident intention of keeping this conquered people forever enslaved, the Bambara had captured their god and were having its cult observed by its own priest, kept captive likewise for the purpose (2). [320]

2. See Desplagnes, Le plateau central nigérien [The Nigerian Central Plateau], p. 175.

The chronicle shows that the Komo also figured in the Ségou pantheon, and if one refers to what we have said about this brotherhood, he will understand the important role it played in the to-da since the fama himself acted as Komo-tigi.

There is absolutely no doubt that cannibalism was in favor on certain definite occasions and, according to appropriate ritual, especially, at the time of the election of a fama. It is obvious, in any case, that under the despotic rule of the clan human life had little value. The atrocities of Dékoro, the passiveness of his victims, the help given him in the execution of his worst crimes by the very people who were directly threatened -- these are not isolated cases. They are indicative of the basic Sudanese temperament in general, which, if not innate, at least is affected by a very ancient atavism. It is because this kind of arbitrary command over the lives of individuals has been practiced for so many centuries that the Bambara often remain impassive in the face of death. They consider its unforeseen occurrence, even when sudden and the result of man's

771 777 came to me to complain that [332] my Negroes were using a satala (1) to take water from his jug.

415 783 177

1. A kind of saucepan made of copper or tin, of European origin, used by Moslem Sudanese for their ritual ablutions.

" 'What difference does that make to you?' I asked him.

" 'What difference does it make!' he answered with an angry air.

"And with that he favored me with the following astonishing line of reasoning:

"'Now you see, I am not a (Moslem) marabout and if the marabouts take water from my jar with the satala, the water that remains in the jar will necessarily be sanctified because it came into contact with that vessel. My children and I drink this water and, since we don't know how to salaam and don't fast, and since we eat pork, God (2) will punish us for having failed

2. That is, in Niany's mind, the nyana called Ngalla (Allah) by the Bambara.

to obey his orders. For, after all, any water that has touched a satala makes a marabout (3) of the person who drinks it. That is

3. That is, an initiate of Ngalla (Allah).

what I heard from my father."

776 The net result is that, on the whole, Ngalla (Allah) is regarded as one of the nyana which we have mentioned and for which the Bambara has a superstitious respect without for that matter being a worshiper. He avoids any contact with all that concerns the nyana, not because of hostility, but for fear of incurring its wrath on account of some impurity. Just as he may call upon any convenient nyana for aid, so he asks the help of

771
797 It should be noted that this acceptance of things Islamic was not imposed on the Bambara by fanatical or warlike converters; in any case it [335] goes back to a time that was long before the exploits of the "people of Macina" and of "those of Fouta."

Mungo Park says that, when he passed through the area, half the Kaarta army were Moslems, and we are even better informed by Raffenel. Of course, it is in general only a kind of "Sudanized" Islam, but that is already a very important step.

Raffenel observes that the people of the Massa-si clan added a much-feared nyana of the boli to the cult of the ancestors which is common to all the Bambara. He further points out
[776] that all the Bambara recognize Ngalla (Allah) and that, although they practice Islam only casually, they distinguish between believers and infidels among themselves. The Kouloubali especially consider themselves to be Moslems and affect to behave as such.

From this derives a curious spectacle giving evidence of a kind of dualism that is very suggestive. The general assembly of what one might call the ruling elements of the Massa-si clan took place at the festival of Baffram, and the Kouloubali, the chiefs of the clan, their relatives, their allies, the principal slave leaders and other dignitaries never failed to attend and to take part in the ceremonies in honor of their clan's tutelary nyana, since the meeting was especially devoted to a renewal of the oath of loyalty to this same idol. Now Raffenel reports that the Moslem festival of the sacrifice of the lamb was also held in the midst of the general rejoicing. It was, to be sure, directed by the Soninké marabouts, but most of the Bambara took part in it, imitating the motions of the officiating priests to the best of their ability and often sacrificing a lamb.

And Raffenel remarks: "Kaffirs though they are, the Bambara nevertheless show respect for the marabouts. Thus, for the festival of Baffram, the Sarakole (1) marabouts, otherwise known

1. Who call themselves Soninké
but whom the Bambara call Marka.

212 by numbers, and notably by ten, which may be obtained, among
801 other ways and if it's a question of representing the Creator, by adding the first four numbers, or by adding the number five to
[776] itself." Ten is the numerical symbol of Faro (god of water); it symbolizes what is just, true, perfect, and complete.

The symbolism of numbers is used in divination: a first
[787] group of eight signs, called the secret count, reproduces the seven first numbers which, according to a Bambara myth, were engraved in space at the instant that the Creator by his word formed the universe. They contain the whole universe.

These numerical signs were ritually traced on the most varied occasions.

[802] Finally, we must note the existence of the sign for "nothing," fu gundo, zero, which stands at the beginning of a series of 196 numerical signs used by those who practice arithomancy.

The word Mandé, of central significance for 44 peoples, may be interpreted, according to some, as manin (the secret name for ten), number of unity and of the cultural community.

F. Writing

212 For everyday use, the Bambara have adopted arabic characters, called by them "writing of the Blacks." In fact, only those who have studied in the Marabouts' schools know how to read or write them. No written literature, properly speaking, exists. A
538 large store of traditions, epics, tales, legends, songs, and proverbs is transmitted orally from generation to [17] generation by professional storytellers, the griot. Moreover, the whole sum of sci-
867 entific, juridical, ethical, and practical knowledge is taught orally
868 in the course of daily life or during long years of initiation. Certain old masters renowned for their learning are consulted from far distances when a chief is in doubt on a point of tradition.

212 Nevertheless, signs do exist for a secret writing that the priests, the heads of families, or blacksmiths draw on the sanctuaries, on masks, furniture, clothing, cabin walls, or in the sand.

212 For the Bambara, things exist by signs. These signs have at-
812 tached themselves to things, calling them to consciousness and to the attention of man.

622 gives the orders concerning local celebrations and initiations.

In fact, the land originally belongs to spirits, and the chief 622 who succeeds the founder of the village is the only one who is able 776 to establish contact with the chief of the spirits and negotiate with him. He is the earthly administrator of the spirit; he assures his worship, the exploitation of the land, and the organization of the community territory.

621 The first chief of the land was the first occupant; the suc- 622 ceeding chiefs are his heirs, following the order of succession. To found a new village, a chief chooses a place in unoccupied territory, usually at a crossroads, near a water source, near a baobab, [718 a doubalé, or other sacred tree. He offers sacrifices to the spirits 824] and receives in exchange their authorization to settle. If his group prospers, and less fortunate families want to establish themselves in this well-favored location, they ask the chief for authorization. However, as Monteil (1) remarks: "... The fa of a familial com-

1. Monteil, Les Bambara du Ségou et du Kaarta [The Bambara of Ségou and Kaarta].

munity depends strictly on the patriarchy only if, attached to it by the male line, he holds some goods of the patriarchy or if he claims rights in this patriarchy. In the contrary case, the family fa conducts himself as a stranger in relation to the patriarchy, which can only treat him in like fashion ..." Every familial community becomes patriarchal at the death of the family head when he has no heirs (see the chapter on inheritance); the community then groups around itself familial communities which themselves include paternally related groups and maternally related groups. When the patriarchy is an old one, a considerable number of persons live under its aegis. All recognize dyamu and taboos (see below) in common.

621 When the settlement becomes too populous, a fa gathers a 631 group and founds another village. Afterwards, the people of neighboring districts may solicit the patronage of the first village, by participating in its djo (2) and by sacrificing to its guardian spirits.

2. See the chapter on religion.

773 abandoned Faro to follow him. Faro vanquished him and punished men by giving them the joints used in manual labor, which all were forced to do. Births became single, but, in compensation, each being had a double, dya, which lived in water.

After these successive disorders, each of which, however, was followed by the acquisition of new knowledge or of a new technique, Faro again undertook Creation and reorganized the universe by a voyage to the ends of the earth. He established the system of the rains, and he classified living beings according to series, each series having a head of the list. Men thus were named and classed by race and by caste, beginning with the slaves. He gave men the eight cereal seeds which remain the basis of their subsistence and which are forever in [826] their clavicles. Finally, he controls all existence and acts of beings placed under his domination.

The present order is only a phase in space and time. Twelve waters are still hidden; they must in the future, on the order of Faro, rise and spread in the world. They will make known the words of the future, and the world conceived by Yo will be realized.

776 All this mythology is presently represented by numerous objects 778 which serve as props for the different rituals regulating men's lives.

Pemba in represented in the houses of the religious chiefs and heads of families by a wooden block named Pembele, image of the first thick plank (1). In a [83] central hollow, symbolizing the tomb,

1. See S. de Ganay, "Aspects de mythologie et de symbolique bambara" [Aspects of Bambara Mythology and Symbolism]. [Ed., J. psych. norm. et path., Vol. 42 (1949), pp. 181-201.]

are engraved three times 22 marks representing Pemba the creator, the transmission of his Word, and his power to Faro, the token of his foreknowledge of all things, etc. Pembele is an altar guaranteeing the prosperity and life of the group.

776 If the balanza tree no longer is the object of a cult, the Bambara still regard it with a special attitude, which recalls its former role. Mousso Koroni is the impure and untilled land; the agricultural techniques she taught are a partial reparation for the disorders she created. This farm work wounds and purifies the land at the same

776 time; it is the noblest work, and one to which every member of the Bambara race must be subject. Faro is represented by a spiral, munu; the vibrating movements of the spiral are the same that animate the daily movements of the sun. These movements are materialized in a basket-work headdress, yugu, which has eight whorls and which formerly was reserved for kings. Faro's face is white, because he took it from the spirit of the air, Teliko, who was an albino. His ears are protected by two fins; his hands are of different sex; his tail is palmate, and his breast is of copper. Albinos and copper are the spirit's preferred sacrifices. All atmospheric manifestations denote his presence; his principal seat is the Niger River, but he has the gift of ubiquity and haunts all waters. Faro is accompanied by helpers, the most representative of whom is the bolokuruni, one-armed blacksmith of a black race. His air messenger is the swallow, who carries the
[824] fertilizing word. Certain plants are in permanent rapport with him: the Yayalẽ, the Ngoyõ (tomato), which is compared to blood. Thus, small fields of tomatoes reserved for the cult of Faro are cultivated in each village. All metals are reserved for Faro. The Bozo, born of Faro's first twins, enjoy a privileged position because they were not subject to the defilement caused by Mousso Koroni and can enter into direct communication with the spirit. In addition, they are the masters of the water.

776 The cult of Faro includes a whole series of taboos, such as the
784 black earth of the river which may not be used by the potters and
841 butter which may not be kept in water. But the principal taboo is menstrual blood, originally provoked by the disorders of Mousso Koroni.

B. Conception of Man

774 The Bambara conceive man as a microcosm, a resumé of the
761 totality of beings and things. The principle of duality contained in the original creative thought is realized in man by his twin souls which compensate for the separation of the sexes. In man, Faro is represented by the ni (soul) and the dya (double). Pemba is represented by the téré (the character, force, and conscience) and the nyama (which is the téré when it leaves its corporeal support after
[826] death). Mousso Koroni is represented by the Wanzo (evil force with

794 A strict internal discipline regulates the members' conduct; this discipline is founded on secrecy, obedience, and speed in carrying out orders. An accused confesses [86] his faults under the effect of the oath, torture, or divination, and the punishments are determined according to the seriousness of the offense in the eyes of the clergy. These punishments are corporal (flogging, confinement in irons, deprivation of food, death) or pecuniary (fines, confiscation); they may include forced labor for the benefit of the clergy. We shall see further on the social and political role these brotherhoods play in Bambara life.

794 796 The Kworé society carries out the rites concerning the sky, space, the cardinal points, and the atmospheric manifestations of Faro, notably rain. The ceremonies generally take place around a tree, the kworé-jigi, situated to the east of the village. The altars are placed either in the brush, in the chief's house, or near the village. The society owns a field of small millet which is reserved to meet the needs of the cult.

[793] The n'Domo includes all the non-circumcised. Heading it is the chief, assisted by a sacrificer, muru-kala-tigi, and by a master of ceremonies, dyoloko-tigi. The society is divided into five grades, corresponding to the five fundamental altars; the initiate advances a grade each year. The society possesses a mask, a whip, and five musical instruments. An annual ceremony takes place after the harvest and includes a blood sacrifice and a ritual fight, followed by a new initiation. The society also owns a ritual field cultivated by its members.

[776] The Nama brotherhood (Nama, "hyena" in Mandé) plays an important role in the Ségou region. Nama is the god of the incomplete, the unique god, whose annual ceremonies at sowing time and harvest time are observed by the men and women together.

794 The society of Kono, whose hut is situated in the middle of the village, must also be mentioned, as well as those of Dyo, an old divinity, Nia or Gnã, Wara, and Duga.

To all of these societies, which have been described by Tauxier, Monteil, G. Dieterlen, etc., must be added the women's societies, still imperfectly known but very powerful and particularly feared by the men. The principal female dyo in the Bamako region are: the Niagua, the Kulukutu, and the Jide which assembles its initiates on Mondays and Fridays.

797 (Koutiala circle), Mandjakuy (San circle), Ségou, Kolongotomo (Macina subdivision), and at Sikasso (apostolic prefecture). In Guinea there is a Catholic center at Siguiri. In Upper Volta there are centers at Niangoloko (Banfora circle), Ouahigouya, and Bam: Black sisters (Ouahigouya circle). Finally, in the Ivory Coast there is a center at Gorhogo.

Protestant missions are even less numerous; they are generally American. The efforts they have exerted are far from having been crowned with success. We will mention, however, the cultural centers at Bamako with two protestant schools, the center at Sirakoro (Yanfolila circle), the ones at Baramba and Somasso (Koutiala circle), comprising two missions, the center at N'Torosso (San circle), and that of Sikasso. In Upper Volta, centers are at Siniena (Banfora circle) and at Ouahigouya. Finally, in the Ivory Coast there is one at Torogo (Korhogo circle).

II. Techniques

182 It is impossible to give a complete picture of all Bambara techniques; we are far from knowing them all. Investigations are being carried out on the spot, and already they indicate that no object, in its form or its material, no gesture of the customary actions, is due to the imagination of the maker. On the contrary, the material, [88] as well as the movements, is integrated in a system of representations that the Bambara can explain. The principal techniques among these have been analyzed and explained, but many have been described in a very superficial manner.

A. Body Techniques

776 The Bambara think that fecundation is the work of Faro. This
833 creative function is represented materially by the eating of a tomato
842 by each spouse before sexual relations, which must be repeated twice. It is by means of this consecrated tomato that Faro transmits the life he conserves in water. The role of the father is to give the new-born his articulations which make him fit for work. He transforms the celestial seed into terrestial seed.

291 [177] designs. European influence has naturally made itself felt in the fashions, and European thread is replacing native cotton thread, but the color symbolism in the bands is retained. Even though European fabrics invade the markets more and more, the traditional clothes remain the most sought after, although they have undergone certain modifications inspired by European fashions even while remaining very original.

291 531 585 Although the Bambara go barefoot, in certain circumstances they make ornamented clogs to give to the new bride. These sandals are decorated with geometric designs, engraved with a hot iron by the blacksmith, that symbolize the twinship, the multiplication of children, the parents, the husband's family, the couple's language, and the sealing of the association. These signs are encircled by the sign of the union of the whole. Also, the whole ritual of taking possession lasts for several days.

302 Coiffure. At the present time, the adult males no longer wear the traditional coiffure consisting of two plaits at the side, but the children still have their hair shaved and braided according to custom. Thus, the uncircumcised boys wear a crest of hair going from the forehead to the nape of the neck, while the rest of the head is shaved. The crest symbolizes the [99] divine serpent. The children of blacksmiths also wear, at the sides of the head, two circles of hair which are cut by lines representing the forge. When a child is born after the death of several brothers and sisters, only half of his head is shaved in mockery, so that the dya subject to this pretended neglect will decide to stay in the child. The children of Marabouts have their hair shaved in such a manner that it forms a spiral which starts in the middle of the skull and covers the whole head. Afterwards, bands of hair are shaved in a manner to trace a cross on this spiral. The little girls wear a small braid across the forehead, falling on the left side, while married women wear a braid at each side of the head. These braids are made by adding fibers of the da, shining with karite, plaited with the hair. Finally, the women wear 30 22 gold rings at the ears, images of the 22 primordial elements, or sometimes a single large ring in the form of a crescent closed by threads of red cotton, which is a résumé of the 22 others. These rings keep impure words from the ear, which plays an important [176] role in generation; it is through the ornamentation that the spirits hear what is said to man.

lineages, they usually abandon such a taboo as soon as they leave the village, and if, because of the habit they have acquired they abide by it until their death, their children give it up.

Carrying his organization into the world of invisible beings, the Bambara endows the latter also with tné, or taboos, and make these his own. Not only are the sacred woods taboo, together with all they contain, but there are also ways of acting and behaving which displease the spirits, and some animals have the capability of making them angry. When a woman comes back from the forest with her fagot of wood on her head, she must unbind it before entering the village or do so on the public square. In some places shoes are removed at the door of the entrance hut, or b'lon through which the village is entered; elsewhere the people take off their caps; and no one ever whistles in the lanes without incurring the hatred of the invisible beings. Partridges, which are numerous in the fields around the walls, must never get into the village except dead and plucked, and children who catch them in their nets never break this custom. If by mischance a partridge flies across the village and cackles in passing, all the population is in turmoil, and for three nights thereafter men, women, and children sleep under the stars. Often, /25/ depending on the oracles of the sorcerer, they even leave their homes and build them again a short distance away.

The genii called boli are the terror of women, children, and the uninitiated, who cannot touch any object used in the ritual and who may not enter their sacred woods and their sanctuaries. The boli (1) have tné, which are taboo for their owners and those that

1. The term boli denotes any evil fetish, and hence any object used by an evil spirit or demon as his dwelling. See Chap. VII, 1.

sacrifice to them, and which sometimes also become taboo for their children. One of the strangest is the tné or taboo of the Bara, which is millet beer, or d'lo. Its owner and the person sacrificing to him must avoid drinking beer if possible, and if the habit is too established

776 among them, they take a complete bath before touching the fetish
784 or sacrificing to it. Usually the tné of the boli is an animal, and the
778 whole family takes it for their own. A palm rat, succulent as it may be to a Bambara palate, will never be eaten by the owners of Bama-n-djigi and their children: it is the tné, or taboo, of the fetish.

784 I have found no tné for animals, but many trees have them, as do medicinal plants, and when these must be used for particular purposes, they must not be placed in contact with, whatever they abhor or are supposed to detest and which in the eyes of the black man is nothing less than their tné, or taboo.

Men and women, young and old, must venerate and respect their tné and those of the genii, and even children know from their earliest years that they cannot see, kill, or eat a certain animal, that they cannot touch, cut, or break a given tree or plant, without incurring either the curse of the ancestor or the anger of the genie and losing their sight.

The severity of the punishments which hang over every Black who forgets the respect due to the tné (especially to his lineage tné and those of the boli fetishes), and hence the fear of incurring them, seems at first quite tyrannical. It is not as great as one would think, however, since the Bambara is a very good casuist when his person and his interests are at stake, and all the prohibitions except those against consuming certain /26/ meats and certain drinks are but a game.

For example, a Dambelé who sees a band of black monkeys ruining his fields and stealing his crops does nothing to stop his dogs from chasing them, and if a friend of an outside lineage comes to help and shoots them, he will have no regrets. A greater confidence is shown by a Djara when a lion ravages his herds: he goes to meet it and begs it to go away, which, according to the Black it always does.

784 When the carcass of a taboo /sic/ is found by one of the people
760 of the lineage which it protects, it usually receives the honors of burial. The Djara, whose tné is the lion, even perform the burial with ceremony: the women weep, the drums beat, and the men offer the lion a piece of cloth, in which it is rolled before being put in the grave.

789 778 825 753 Animals also have gnâma, and the gnâma of birds are among those most feared. By preference, they attack little children, who die in convulsions as a result; it is impossible to mistake the cause of their illness and death, since the hands and feet of the child curl up like a bird's claws. Birds are thought to be especially wicked in winter time, undoubtedly because they nest, find plenty of food, and [751] are big, fat, and vigorous. During that season mothers tie around the necks of nursing infants a string that has nine knots in it, which places them under the protection of their gnâma. Birds keep their gnâma even when dead, and I remember that in November or December, 1907, all the village of Songhobougou attributed a small influenza epidemic to the death of a big black bird (the djougo), which a European killed in one of their fields. "We have pains in our kidneys, we have pains in our throats, and we cough," they said dismally, "and the hunter is to blame for it all. Toubabou ko té vva? A ye djougo do fa en ka forola, djougo gnâma do.... It is the European's fault, he killed a djougo in our fields and we are weighed down with gnâma." /29/

Chapter 2

Animism and Its Consequences

1. The Beliefs about Spirits

• 776 The Bambara has not deified the forces of nature. Although in some instances he shows them respect and fears them, he leaves them without priest, /sacrificial/ victim, or altar; he is not a "nature worshipper" in the strict sense of the word; his true religion is animism. His spiritualism knows no bounds and he sees genii just about everywhere. The bush is full of these spirits; they lodge in the trees or lounge astride branches; they run around the outskirts of villages; splash in ponds and wells; they pull themselves onto high rocks,

776 termite nests, and mounds, and like very much to crouch in the corners formed by paths that fork or intersect. Inside the villages there are also those that roll in the ashes of the hearth and stir the fire, while others watch over the household utensils -- pots, gourds, plates, and all the kitchen implements. The b'lon (vestibules or entrance huts) through which a village or a dwelling is entered are nests of genii. Individual homes are definitely not private, either; all the horns, rags, pieces of wood, and gourds, dusty and black with smoke, that are piously hung over the doors, on the beams that support the flat terrace roofs, on the walls, and pretty much everywhere, are dwellings of genii, or votive offerings in honor of those who fly in the air or run through the outbuildings.

The Bambara has not been able to rise to the conception of a complete immateriality. Although he attributes some invisible, intangible quality to everything, /30/ he also attributes to everything some material aspect or body. He thus arrives at the strangest ideas, since his imagination carries him toward the world of spirits or genii. These, with whatever name they are invested, dress in clothes and collect gold and silver, have sex and procreate; they are also seized by the lowest, vilest, and most contemptible passions. They are jealous, hateful, and intemperate, and they do evil for pleasure. The Black very seldom shows them as good, compassionate, or merciful. The life they lead is not in the least edifying; they go from orgy to orgy and are constantly fighting among themselves.

One might say that the genii are terrible tyrants, always ready to pounce on poor humanity. They are not all equally powerful or equally wicked. The Bambara divides them into two quite distinct groups: those who can directly grant a favor and, if they wish, do good; and those who can only do evil, although they can refrain from it. He makes the same petitions and uses the same words in sacrificing to both, but the words have a different meaning. When said to the first group, the words "give us rain, wives, children, prosperity," are a direct request; the words become an indirect request when addressed to spirits of the second group. In the latter case they mean "do nothing to deprive us of rain, wives, children, or prosperity."

●776 In a word, "if you must work your wickedness on someone or on something, let it not be on our persons or on what belongs to us."

The spirits of the first group are gnéna (1), better known under

1. Women and also children often refer to both the djiné and the boli under the generic term gnena, and in the presence of the uninitiated, initiates use these words without making any distinction. It is nonetheless true that the word gnéna denotes a genie called djiné, and the word gnâ a genie called boli.

the name of djiné (Arabic word الجن imported by the Moslems), and those of the second are gnâ, or boli.

As conceived of by a black man, the gnéna, or djiné, are not strictly speaking angels; they are beings intermediate between angels and men. Not only do they eat, drink, procreate, pursue well-being and wealth, they are also /31/ subject to the physical and mental suffering that afflicts human beings, and can die as the victims of the hate, vengeance, or wickedness of a stronger being. Their priests are the gnéna-n-sonna or dougoutigi (village chiefs whose jurisdiction is religious and often also civil), and the sacrifices which are offered to them are addressed indirectly and in a very vague and very confused way to a Supreme Being. This vagueness and confusion is apparent especially at the present time, since all ideas of the Divinity are disappearing more and more every day; but it is likely that, in the beginning, God had a greater part in the honors rendered to His deputies, to those whom He appointed as guardians of the elements, dividing among them the empire of His creation.

[793 782]

The djiné remain subject to the authority of the Creator. They have not cast off the yoke and, wicked though they may be, they have not ceased to be good. If they wish, they can do good, protect men, and grant them favors. They punish and chastise because they are above all responsible for the welfare of humanity.

776 They are the necessary intermediaries between man and the Divinity, and since each has absolute authority in its sphere. The black man must appeal to them first of all in all his needs. Consequently, these spirits have assumed a dominant place in the Negro mind to the detriment of God.

776 829 Every djiné can appear in human form, and when it does so it wears a white skin and his appearance does not differ from that of a European. Many a time I have heard women, young girls, and children whisper behind me: "A gné dé djémé wala-wala déren! a boloou be iko djiniou ta tjoko, ne bi siran, He has white eyeballs! his arms are like those of the genii, I am afraid...." This seems strange and leads one to think that this concept developed after the arrival of white men whom, not without reason, they regard as being superior to them in every way. However, I believe that it antedates our arrival. The old Bambara who told me that Mage and Quintin, held prisoners at Segou by King Amadou (أحمدو) until the death of his father, Omar el Hadj (1), were regarded by them as djiné seemed to

1. El-Hadj-Omar, or Omar the Pilgrim, so called because he saw Mecca, was at Ségou around 1835, 1837, or 1839, sometime before the death of Tjéyolo, which occurred around 1839. See Introduction /not translated/.

me sincere, for an old legend states that during in /32/ one of their migrations the Bambara skirted a country inhabited by white men who resembled genii in every way. I might also add that white is the [822] liturgical color in formal sacrifices to the djiné; hens, goats, sheep, even kola nuts -- short of the impossible -- are white in color, undoubtedly because of the people's notion of the color of genii. When traveling Europeans ask their hospitality, they do everything possible to find a white hen to offer them; they believe that this is the way they can most honor their guests because of the color of the latter's skin. The old men think also that we French have intimate

776 829 contact with the genii and know their family names, or diamou; however little they may be at ease with a Frenchman they will beg him to show them the place where a well should be dug, convinced that we know where live the spirits who are appointed to watch over water. Do we not bear them a certain resemblance?

776 The gnâ, or boli, also are sexed; they reproduce and found families. They are superior to the genii in power and wickedness, and, except indirectly, capable only of evil. They are at open war with God who, without taking away any of their intelligence or liberty, has condemned them tosuffer and to undergo the punishment of fire. They continually set up ambushes against the djiné to make their plans, good or evil, miscarry; they take pleasure in tormenting men, and the Bambara fears them greatly. The worship of the djiné is nothing compared to what is accorded them. Those considered most powerful have an entire retinue to serve them and to render them [651] honors and, as will be seen later, the head tax of 3.50 francs per head is nothing compared to the sums the Blacks spend to ward off the blows of the boli and avoid their wrath.

Like the djiné, the boli appears in human form, but it is disgusting and hideous to behold. All those upon whom the favor of an appearance is bestowed are frozen with terror; the body of the boli is terrifyingly black, and its face disappears in a flame above which rise horns.

[782 822] In the sacrifices to the boli the liturgical colors are black and red, and a white victim is never offered except in an indirect sacrifice necessitated by an offering called saraka, which is quite rare. /33/

2. Sorcery and Priesthood

152 Surrounded by spirits, by genii always seeking to harm him, a Bambara is quick to believe that he is the victim of one. This attitude contributes more than a little to give him a certain endurance manifested in the face of suffering. I would even say that he usually bears suffering, not with stoicism but with the torpor of an animal.

152 After all, what can one do about an evil that cannot be exorcised except to bear it? What can one do against a powerful being that cannot be disarmed? Nevertheless, in the depth of his being he feels a need to enjoy himself (and enjoyment for him consists in drinking, eating, sleeping, and procreating); therefore he feels a horror of all suffering and neglects nothing that can protect him from it. In order 751/ to live in peace, he reddens everything a little with blood and covers 789 his body with grigris or good-luck charms, with talismans that change the course of things and even of nature, and lastly amulets which will forearm him against poison, help him avoid an accident, cause the sorcery of the malicious to miscarry, send away the gnâma of the genii, of the living and the dead, and prevent the unknown forces which are found more or less everywhere in nature from taking hold of the wearer. For this protection they address themselves to the priests of the djiné and the boli, and especially to the sorcerers who have close contacts with the genii and are the mediators between man and the entire invisible world.

776 Since the Bambara conceived the visible and invisible world as 782 similar to what he believes himself to be, he has come to believe quite naturally and without any effort that the genii can be seen and conversed with their language understood and, finally, that it is possible to subjugate the forces of nature and hold them in one's power. By making offerings and sacrifices or causing them to be made through the intermediary of a priest, he can win a spirit's favor and thus lessen his fears and terrors. But if the spirit is weak, they will be ready to withdraw their attentions; it must be equal to the one feared and if possible outdo it.

778 It is force, or, to use their term, fanga, that governs each 791 person's conduct toward his neighbor; to be obeyed, a man must first cause himself to be feared, and only a powerful man will succeed and see everything yield before him. /34/

The Negroes have seen people of low birth and poor family succeed in increasing their property and become rich to the point of where they have servants and slaves and dominate a whole village, a whole tribe, or a whole people. Since they like to reason from

793 The pagan priesthood -- like the Moslem -- also casts a halo of
776 strength and power about its priest; he becomes the close friend of his fetish, and the latter often condescends to take his diamou, or family name, and become, for example, the dasiri, or protecting genie, of a village. Depending on the name of its owner, it will be a Djara or a Kouloubali or a Tankara, etc., etc.

793 An intelligent Bambara who, for one reason or another, cannot
564 be a sorcerer, has one other means of becoming feared and powerful: he can become a gnéna sonna or dougoutigi (priest of the protecting fetish of villages, called dasiri), a gnâtigi or bolitigi (matter of a boli), or at least to belong to a retinue such as surrounds every powerful boli fetish.

793 There are curbs on the thirst for fanga, or power, however. The office of gnéna sonna is the prerogative of a particular family within which it is transmitted from brother to brother by right of inheritance, and not every Negro succeeds in obtaining a boli -- I mean an influential boli that would establish him among his people -- even though one can be obtained by purchase. A man desiring a particular boli must first form a retinue for it, and its members must be taken from the village itself; the mutual mistrust and fear of poison are so great that it is not always possible to do so. Beside the price to be paid, varying between 25 and 30 francs, there are the expenses of the konio, or wedding of the fetish (the purchaser marries his boli), which raise its cost to 60, 80, and sometimes 100 francs. Furthermore, there is a mass of liturgical formulas to be engraved in the memory. These must be learned in every detail, for the omission of one sign or gesture, the garbling of one formula can easily incur the disfavor of the fetish, which is relentless with one who is careless and causes him to perish! It should be added that before a person can reward himself with such a luxury as the acquisition of a fetish, he must consult a sorcerer and take his advice, and if he is not rich and already feared, the sorcerer knows how to place his veto. For the mass
794 of the people there is thus only one way to be safe: to become
793 associated with sects, and with as many sects as possible. Through membership they earn the title of "sons of boli," and build relationships for themselves and make friends among those in power, the

794 bolitigi, the latter have every interest in protecting them, for not
793 only do they pay /38/ their masters annual dues of 80 to 160 cowrie shells, which is little, but they also provide the meats and kola nuts for sacrifices and the d'lo, or beer, for the nocturnal drinking bouts and orgies, and thus are a real godsend.

3. Metamorphosis

776 The Negroes say that a djiné or a boli genie can pass from one
789 body into another. Today it may paddle in a pond, be enclosed in a tree, or sit on a rock; tomorrow, if it wishes, it will make its dwelling in a cow's tail, in a horn, in a dirty rag. Whatever its dwelling may be, it is never confined. The Negroes compare these spirits to the wind, to a breath which enters and penetrates into a space through the smallest crack and fills it. Yet they have bodies and are equipped with organs; they drink, eat, and procreate and differ from man only in their tenuity. Since the Negroes are convinced that certain people have become able to master and command the spirits, could they not come to believe that it was possible to attain, like them, a rarefied state? In any case, they do believe in metamorphosis, and it is by entering into an animal or plant, or changing himself into an animal, a plant, etc., that the wicked person succeeds most often in avenging himself, in appeasing his hatred, and even in doing evil for the mere pleasure of doing it.

789 A good number of sorcerers have this privilege, and sorcerers
564 are not the only ones! Entire castes have the power of metamorphosis;
754 among others the Koulé, who dig out canoes and mend cracked gourds, can all change themselves into hyenas. The sons of the Siri, who are members of the sect dedicated to the boli of this name and are called souba (1) because they commit their crimes during the night, change

1. The name souba is derived from sou ("night") and ba ("great"), ma ("man"), being implied. It means "a man of the great night," "men

761 "Koroya do, it is old age," but let us allow them to finish their sentences and continue their thoughts "a ko toun kadi Komo yé, he was beloved by the Komo," -- "à ko toun kadi Kono yé, Nama yé, Douga ye, he was beloved by the Kono, the Nama, the Douga," etc.

761 When people pass by holding a rooster or hen by the feet one
782 may wonder where they are going; if one follows, one finds that they are going to the temple of a fetish, there to sacrifice and to redden
776 their god with blood. "A toun koromé Alla séra à ma, he was old and God came to him," is an expression which is rarely on Bambara lips. When it is heard, it is used with a very special meaning; it signifies that the old man in question was a good man, beloved by all, even by God, but by no means that God killed him. The sacrifices made on this occasion clearly demonstrate this, for they are all directed to a fetish. If God alone were the cause and not the fetishes, the family of the deceased would refrain from all sacrifice; at the very most, it would offer a saraka by order of a sorcerer, but even the saraka offered to God -- and they are offered to Him -- is not a sacrifice, as we shall see later.

761 The priests of a djiné fetish and the owners and priests of a boli
778 fetish have the consolation that they always fall under the blows of the genie which they hold and to which they sacrifice. As for other mortals, 80 times out of 100, and one might say even more without exaggerating, they are killed by a boli fetish. The Komo, Kono, Nia, Nama, and Douga fetishes etc., are the chief murderers, and entire villages are often decimated by them.

761 Although they are able to deliver blows on their own initiative,
578 they are often only intermediaries, the agents of a depraved will to
674 which they have offered their services; almost always there is either a thrown poison, korti, or a poison that is poured, dounkono. Thus
754 sorcerors are consulted at every death; one is sought through their mediation. An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth is the great maxim for the Bambara as for the Jews, and vengeance must be taken on the one who was able to win over the good graces of a fetish and force it to bring suffering or mourning into the bosom of a family. This vengeance is obtained through the intermediary of a fetish, and

754 of poison, and the brown powder concealed in it is usually Strophanthus
674 seed /53/ crushed and kneaded into excreta of human corpses and
278 saliva taken from their mouths. This mixture is dried in the shade and then wrapped in a piece of hyena intestine, and to render the effects more immediate and certain, the fetish is brought out and placed on this meal and a sacrifice made. These sacrosanct preparations are made at night, if possible in the first quarter of the moon, and never on a Monday or Thursday, which are days of rest for the boli gods (1).

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1. The boli have two days' leave per week, and the Negroes also take this rest. However, they are broad-minded on this point even though for certain labors they ask the religious chief or a sorcerer to be allowed to work. As a rule a boli may not go out Sunday or Monday night nor on Wednesday or Thursday. They quite often do go out, however, but only by command of the fetish or a sorcerer. To bring out a fetish is to spend the night dancing the dance of the fetish, and when the initiates want to dance they always manage to do so. The boli are also sacrificed to on Monday and Thursday even though they are at rest. In theory there is rest for the fetishes; actually, the idea is loosely applied.

754 To succeed and to keep from displeasing the fetish, who would
674 then abandon your cause and turn against you, you must follow the prescriptions of the priest and members of his council to the letter; the omission of one rite, one sign, one formula, one imprecation, destroys the power of the poison contained in the horn, or at least renders it ineffective. Sometimes this powder is thrown and is called korti sou, and at other times it is poured and is called dounkono di.

775 directed more to the authority which they had in their lifetimes than
769 to the persons themselves.

775 A good number of Bambara believe in hell and assert that the souls of the wicked are condemned by God to eternal torment. It is clear that they are changed into demons and do not come back to life, but it is so difficult to deserve hell that not one Bambara goes there, and they live without any fear, just as if it did not exist. This belief in hell perhaps indicates an exception to my statement on the reincarnation of souls but does not destroy its validity, and it can be stated that the majority of Negroes believe in such a reincarnation. /61/

Chapter 4

Bambara Ideas concerning God, Invisible Beings, and Adam and Eve

1. Belief in God

●776 The Bambara believe in the existence of a Supreme Being who is Creator and Master of all things; they believe in God, in a recompensing God who can punish and reward. Their most polished formulas are those in which they testify to their belief in Him, and His name is on their lips at every moment without any special reason.

776 To a young married couple, a Bambara hastens to say: "May
576 your union be happy, may God give you peace and many children," and when a family is in sorrow, for instance because they have lost one of the members, it is in God that they seek consolation and in invoking Him that they give comfort: "May God have pity on him and grant him a happy sojourn in Lahara," "may He not separate him from good people and may He add to your days those of which he has been deprived." (1)

776 1. These last phrases have been taken
775 by some as a reason to doubt that the

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Bambara believe in the reincarnation of souls. But the Negroes say that a soul separated from the body lacks something, it is not complete. Since a soul stays in Lahara for a fairly long time, until it finds the opportunity to be reincarnated and decides to do so, the wish is expressed that during this period that it may live with the souls of good people and not suffer too much from the loss of its body -- and nothing more. These comforting expressions are heard at every death, whether of a child, a man, or an old man.

776 842 The sterility of a woman is obviously not natural; it is attributed to fetishes, to the evil spells of a malicious person, and quite often /62/ also to God. "Alla b'a kégné dén-na --, God is placing an obstacle to /against/ her having children." As the Bambara gives small gifts of honey, cotton, butter, sugar, or cowrie shells to a woman who has just given birth, they say, "May God soothe your back (your pains); may He preserve your child." Upon receiving the slightest favor, the recipient commends the one who performed it to the protection of the Almighty, and the wishes at festivals and drinking bouts are an endless litany a large part of which refers to God.

776 •The Bambara speak the name of God apropos of a trifle and always -- except in certain sacrifices to the boli fetishes where they use it blasphemously -- with some respect. I confess that (if I did not know through being somewhat acquainted with them that in their mouths this name is a word and no more, a commonplace into which enters neither affection nor love) it would sometimes seem that they have deep and tender feelings of piety. In fact there is nothing more touching than to hear a pagan Negro, a Bambara, answer whoever asks after his health: "Nébi Alla tanoun, I praise God, I glorify God."

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776 In the mouths of the Bambara, the name of God is only a word!
782 Although they acknowledge Him as sole and sovereign master of all things, Who created the visible, the invisible, and all that exists, although they believe Him capable of rewarding the good and punishing the evil even in this world (but suffering and death are rarely, or practically never, attributed to Him), they do not dream of praying to Him or invoking Him, and they who redden everything a little with the blood of victims leave God without an altar, without a priest, and without a sacrifice. They address Him directly only when ordered to do so by a sorcerer; and then they comply through fear, because they are forced to -- "djakoyala, by force," as they say so well, and their hearts are not in it.

They appeal to the Almighty Being indirectly, through the mediation of the fetishes called djiné, but actually this indirect appeal is barely noticeable -- their knowledge has been dimmed and is becoming dimmer each day, and the created has replaced the uncreated. As I will explain when speaking of the worship of the djiné genii, the mediator between the Bambara and the Divinity has risen to the detriment of God; He has been eclipsed and the mediator has taken His place.

000 This evolution of the Negro is in no way an ascending one; it is actually a decline, for from a more perfect state they have descended to a /63/ less perfect one, and from the less perfect they have arrived at a discord in which they bury themselves a little more every day. This is a strange evolution which in no way recalls the theories of rational evolutionists.

776 I have said that the Bambara address God directly by order of
782 a sorcerer, and from time to time an individual, a family, or an entire village can be seen at a crossing of paths, in a bare spot outside the village, or sometimes even in the village under one of the great trees that shade the square, offering Him /millet/ flour mixed with water, hens, goats, and kola nuts. That is the saraka.

The saraka is the Bambara's only direct religious act toward their Creator and sovereign Lord. Although it is often performed and presented in the corner formed by two paths that fork or cross, it may be given anywhere, and I was right in saying that the Bambara God remains without priest, altar or sacrifice, and, strictly speaking, without worship.

3. The Bambara Belief in God is not of Islamic Origin any more than are their Ideas on Heaven, Hell, and the World of Invisible Beings (1)

1. Cf. J. Brun of the White Fathers, "Notes sur les Croyances et les Pratiques religieuses des Malinkés fétishistes /Notes on the Religious Beliefs and Practices of the Malinke Fetishists/," Anthropos, II, pp. 952-954.

Bambara notions of God, heaven and hell, and the world of invisible beings conform so closely to the teachings of the Koran, that we ask ourselves first of all if they were not received from the Moslems. Our surprise increases even more when we begin to study these people, for with respect to religion the only terms in which they can express themselves in present-day language are purely and exclusively Arabic. This is a fact, and the similarity is very easy to establish.

The angels -- Bambara méléké, Arabic malā'ika مَلَائِكَة -- are spirits -- Bambara hakili, Arabic 'aql عَقْل --, superior to the genii -- Bambara djiné, Arabic el-djin اَلْجِنّ --, beings intermediate between men and angels and to whom God has entrusted the custody of the elements. The good angels are in paradise -- Bambara ardjana, Arabic El-djanna اَلْجَنَّة -- up there in the blue sky and constitute the heavenly court of the Creator and sovereign Lord of all things, God -- Bambara Alla, Arabic Allah اَللّٰه --, the cause of good and evil. God rules seven heavens and seven terrestrial globes placed one above the other, and the wicked angels

772 -- Bambara sétané, Arabic chéitane شَيْطَان -- are at open war with
776 Him; rooted in evil, powerful, and capable of harming and oppressing
177 human beings. They must nevertheless undergo eternal punishments in hell -- Bambara djahanéma /67/, Arabic djahannam جَهَنَّم -- in a fire compared to which, says the legend, ours would be only the little that would remain after seven consecutive washings with large quantities of water.

As this cursory glance indicates, both concept and words are strictly from the Koran. Can it be doubted that the Negro was taught all this by the Moslem? I have lived too long among the Negroes to take appearance for reality, and here once again I am wary of accepting the statements of our learned "travelers."

177 For centuries now, Islam has penetrated into the heart of Africa
181 and established itself in the midst of our Negro peoples, slow as its advance has been, it has not failed to leave its mark. The Bambara, the most important kernel of the Mande peoples, was always at war against the Moslem to safeguard his independence and the faith of his fathers (the wars were primarily religious). They were in turn conqueror and conquered, but most often conquered (for the Bambara, egoistic, plan their personal and individual interests before that of the group, and they always lacked cohesion and agreement, and never really had a leader at the top); they could not escape. Since they are nevertheless essentially deceitful, crafty, and hypocritical so that other peoples compare them to a piece of cow dung, dry outside but soft and loose inside so that it breaks and soils one as soon as a foot is placed on it -- and this comparison pleases them -- I do not hesitate to say that they took nothing from Islam that was not already in their minds. If they have taken Arabic terms to express themselves, I cannot doubt that this was purely diplomacy on their part. The use of Arabic terms that correspond to their own ideas in order to express their beliefs in present-day language represented adaptation and in no sense acceptance on their part. I would even assert that here they gave evidence, not of tact towards their conqueror (this is a quality which at the present time they do not possess even in an embryonic form), but of a certain pliability and shrewdness. In fact, by appearing before their tyrant on an equal footing with respect to dogma, they

771 If the Bambara have fought to safeguard their independence,
181 they have done so primarily to preserve their faith and keep their fetishes. They have shown such great attachment for these, that their
[101] conquerors have described them as rebels and applied to them the epithet Bamba, synonym of Kafri. These religious struggles in themselves allow us to state as an indisputable fact that before the arrival of the Moslems the Bambara were animistic and sacrificed to genii. /69/

776 Did they have an exact and precise idea of their genii as they
811 do now? Apparently yes, for they always reasoned using themselves as a basis of comparison so that in their minds the invisible, impalpable genii to whom they sacrificed had a striking resemblance to man. It is not a man, and yet it is one, they say unable to define their concept or idea, ma si fa do (1).

1. Ma; "man"; si fa' "certain kind"; do; "it is."

776 The Moslem word djin translates this idea precisely, and the
782 Bambara use it in everyday language; but when the day of the sacrifice comes, they become unaware of it and there remains only one word -- ma, meaning "man." When they redden with blood the bark of
[824] the baobab (Adansonia digitata), the tamarind tree, the false cedar (family of the cedrelaceae), etc., to obtain the good graces and protection of the genie who dwells there, they always confer on it the title ma ("man"), and never that of djiné. "Ma n'zira ba, ma n'tomi ba, ma djala ba; O great baobab man, O great tamarind tree man, O great false-cedar man!" begins the formula used by the sacrificer in offering victims and millet flour to the genie (2). They also have

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2. In /J. Henry/, "Culte des esprits chez les Bambara /Spirit Worship among the Bambara/," Anthropos, Vol. III, No. 4 (1908), p. 1 /p. 702/, note 1, there is an error in translation.

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Ma n'zira ba, etc., does not mean "great baobab of man." The real meaning is: "O man who is a great baobab." In writing it I prefer a "z" to an "a." Usually the Bambara soften the hard sound by a euphonious little "n." With a hard "s" the word sira cannot be distinguished from the word "tobacco": sira siramougou, "snuff tobacco"; n'ziremougou, "baobab flour."

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776 a purely Bambara term to express their idea /of these spirits/, and
782 they to the word djiné; they call them gnéna.

776 Before the arrival of the Moslems, the Negro sacrificed to beings
782 to whom they have attributed bodies and souls, although imponderable
177 and invisible, who are intermediate between men and angels and whom
798 the Arabs call الجن el djiné. But they also sacrificed to evil beings, superior to the former in power, whom they call boli. The legend of the boli, an ironic legend which I will tell in full when I discuss this matter, is sufficient proof of this belief. For the Moslems of the Sudan only two things here below /70/ are worthy of attention: Mecca (Makka) and Stamboul -- old Abdul Hamid, Sultan of Constantinople -- who in their eyes, as in the eyes of all Moslems of our colonies, is the great Pope of Islam. Everything that does not bear the stamp of Mecca, everything that does not come from Stamboul, is to be rejected and scorned. Thus the Bambara, fertile in expedients, quickly managed to find a way out of their discussions with the propagators of Islam: "All our boli come from Mecca," was their weapon of war.

776 The Bambara were pursued from every side, unable to perform
177 publicly even religious ceremonies in honor of simple genii. Can
798 one believe that they added others that were still more terrible? As conquerors the Moslems have always ruthlessly opposed idolatry, destroying its temples and overthrowing its altars. "Believe or die" has always been their motto and always will be as long as they feel

176 177 798 strong. Is it not a fact that this law still operated forcefully at the time of the last kings of Segou, when El-Hadj-Omar (1) took the

1. El-Hadj-Omar ("Omar the Pilgrim"), so named because, it is said, he made the journey to Mecca.

crown from the pagan king Mary to give it to his son Ahmadou (2)?

2. Bambara translation of the word Ahmed.

It was Ahmadou who held captive our explorers Mage and Quintin, and at the death of his father he left for Yamina and then for Nioro, leaving the crown to his son Madani. For those Bambara who were incautious, whose fetishes were seized, or who were caught sacrificing, the consequences were the confiscation of possessions, imprisonment, slavery, and death. The huge area where the native cemetery and [764] the European cemetery (3) are found at present was soaked with the

3. There are two European cemeteries at Ségou. The first is at the entrance of the city on the south side. The second, the only one in which burial takes place at present, is on the edge of the native cemetery, south on the road from Sens and Koutiala, about 300 or 400 meters from the city.

blood of pagans. Who will ever know how many heads rolled at that time for a purely religious purpose! On some days the arm of the executioner stopped only because it was tired and unable to strike -- so I was told by some Negroes who owed their /71/ lives to this fatigue. And I believe them, for the greatest praise that the story-tellers /griots/ accord these tyrants is that they knew how to cut off heads. The legend that the boli came from Mecca was born inevitably

776 177 798 out of the Bambara's need to soften their crime of idolatry and to preserve it by lending it extenuating circumstances. If the cradle of Islam is Mecca, if its superiority is derived from the holiness of that city, chosen and beloved by God (1), what can the Moslems want of

1. See what I said above on the subject of Mecca and Stamboul.

him, the Bambara, whose religion comes from this same much vaunted city? And if the God of Whom the Moslems preached to the Bambara has decreed everything (2), good and evil, if He is the Author of both

2. See the Koran: VI, v. 3 - 39; X, v. 99; XIV, v. 4; XVII, v. 32; XXXVI, v. 6, 7, 8, 9; LIII, v. 43, 44, 45 - 49; LXXVI, v. 29; LXXX, v. 29; etc.

good and evil and leads each person along the course that pleases Him to such a degree that he no longer has freedom of choice, why wish to take from them that which God has given them, that which comes to them from the holy city of Mecca!

776 796 782 [192] The Bambara term for the boli is gna. Their idea of them corresponds closely to the Arab concept of the chéitane شَيْطَان, and in everyday language, they define them by a single word: sétané, "satan," even though this word is never on their lips in the sacrifices. In their nocturnal orgies and religious dances, the Negroes' notion of the genie to which they are sacrificing are shown in concrete form. And when, in their religious ceremonies in honor of the Komo, Kono, [178] Nama, etc., the spirit appears by the glow of little fires lit in the sacred woods, decked out in a cloak of feathers, his head hidden in a huge horned mask that has nothing human about it, one cannot help 776 796 thinking of the tales of old Breton grandmothers, told on a winter evening in the stables. The blasting of trumpets, bamboos, and koba 534 782 horns (3), the tinkling of /72/ the little bell, and the shouts of the

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3. Formerly the trumpets and horns were ivory. The Moslem tyrants quickly had them confiscated, no doubt because they knew the price of an elephant tusk. At present the Bambara use only cattle horns and those of the koba, a large antelope which grows to the size of a fine heifer. (Koba is the word that designates this antelope in the Peul language; the Bambara call it dadjé, "white mouth," no doubt because it has two white lines on its jowls.)

crowd grip and terrify you and make you think yourself transported into the midst of a sabbath of long ago. When one has been present at these scenes, one does not doubt the veracity of the Negroes who say: "When the boli appears it is hideous and freezes with fear whoever sees it. It is as black as soot and its face disappears in a flame above which there are horns."

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The face disappearing in a flame inevitably recalls the idea of an infernal spirit, and one who has been present at certain sacrifices to the Komo and the Nama, for example, and has heard the blasphemies of the sacrificer no longer doubts that it is Satan himself that is worshipped here. The blasphemies are repeated by all those present: Alla k'an bla, "may God leave us" (the real meaning: "We do not want God"); Alla djampa ba, "God is a great traitor" (meaning: "God makes promises and does not fulfill them, since he has decreed everything and his decrees are immutable"; A yé né djampa, "he has betrayed me," says a Negro of someone who has made him a promise and has not kept it). One is further convinced by being present at the sacrifice to Touafé Bla (1), one of the most ancient boli. The

1. The name Touafé Bla undoubtedly comes from the custom of suspending

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this boli from the belt and hanging
it at the side along the thigh.

three most famous sorcerers, whose names -- Makono, Tjewolo, and Tjéba -- have been preserved, but whose origin is lost in the dark of ages, sacrificed to it by preference. This is the formula:

"Touafé Bla, Touafé Bla, the mountain of Touafé Bla is known, the trees of this mountain are known, I want to speak of the fire of its mountain. Touafé Bla, spare some houses (meaning: 'those of my friends') and go and kindle (your fire) in others (meaning: 'cast ruin and desolation among my enemies, among those who wish me ill'). Touafé Bla, favor me, and if I cannot see your fire, Touafé Bla, let me at least see the tip of its long column of smoke (meaning: 'you live in the fire; I cannot see your dwelling, but I can still know your power through the smoke of your fire, that is to say, /I shall know it/ if I am a witness of the misfortunes which you will cause to fall on my enemies and those whom I hate')." /73/

This formula shows us clearly that the boli, or gnâ, live in fire. The Negroes sacrificed to them before the arrival of the Moslems, and gave concrete form to their concept of the infernal spirit, just as they do today, by decking themselves out in a hideous horned mask and a cloak of feathers. Their blowing and shouting in the sacred woods on the days of great orgies have remained the same, and al-
[192] though they have taken the words sétané شيطان and djahanéma جهنم from the Moslems, they have had the concept for a long time.

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Now then, as to the Bambaras' knowledge of the Supreme Being, God the Creator and Ruler, Lord of all, do they owe it to the Moslems? The Bambara have too hierarchical a nature to need a master here! The youngest child is always the slave of the next older brother, who is the slave of an older one, and so the progression moves up invariably without ever changing, to the grey beard, the elder, the tjekoroba, a real fetish whom everyone obeys, whatever his stupidity, his narrowness of mind, or his lack of judgment.

In every family there is the same progression: the immediate lord of the children is their father, while he in turn bows before his

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776 elders; and above them, as undisputed lord, soars the eldest, the
181 gouatigi, or head of the family.

All the gouatigi are subject to heads of quarters, led by the
776 dougoutigi, (1) or village heads; these obey the kafotigi, or heads of
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1. The dougoutigi, or religious head of the village, takes precedence over the sotigi, or civil head. I believe that since the time of Carrier, administrator of the circle in 1901, this hierarchy as such has been officially done away with. It persists nevertheless, and the kafotigi and fama déou, priestly in character, secretly retain their prestige.

the canton, who in turn are governed by the fama déou, sons of the king or ministers. Such was the original organization of the Bambara, and all these petty chiefs, were absolute and uncontested lords, each in his own sphere.

776 Above them all there was the king, Fama or Massa (2), whose
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2. The word Massa, used to designate the king, also means "great and powerful sorcerer." In the beginning the king really had absolute power, both civil and religious, and was really the prince or pope of fetishism. If he were not, would he have been given the title of Massa, "great priest," "great sorcerer?"

chief function was to allow himself to live in affluence and /74/ sweet idleness. He held all his subjects in his hands; all were his slaves, from the least to the highest, and he had the power of life and death over each and every one.

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181 Before the arrival of the Moslem, the Bambara sacrificed to the gnéna, otherwise known as djiné, and to the gnâ, or sétané; and all these genii, whatever name one is pleased to call them, were arranged in a hierarchy as they are today. They were all divided into groups, each with its head, and these heads in turn formed other groups governed by a more powerful one. And if we conclude that the Bambara owes the concept of this hierarchy to the Moslem, would we not be saying that the latter pulled his sword from its sheath in order to strengthen the Negro in his fetishism? Would not we be admitting that he betrayed the Koran which commands him to destroy idolatry: "... kill them /idolators/ wheresoever you shall find them, and take them prisoners, and besiege them, and lay wait for them in every convenient place." (1) All the evidence permits us to say that this hierarchy in

1. Koran: chap. IX, v. 5.

the world of invisible beings comes from the Bambara themselves! How then can we believe that they stopped half-way, they who are always grouping and dividing? Is it possible that they did not attain the idea of the autocrat, the unparalleled one, God the sovereign Lord of the genii and sovereign Lord of the beings beneath them, of men and the rest of creation?

And when I study the Bambara hierarchy, I become aware that it is primarily religious! The gotatigi, or head of the family, is a priest; the Fama or Massa, the king, is a priest! Recognition of the genii and of the Creator must thus necessarily have preceded it.

Consequently, there is every reason to believe, not only that the Bambara had the idea of an only God, sovereign Lord of all before the arrival of the Moslems, but that this was their first belief.

776 In the mouth of a Bambara the word God has not nearly the breadth of meaning that we give it. They believe that although He sees all, knows all, and exercises His power everywhere, He is not really everywhere, for powerful, great, and immeasurable as He may be, He remains a "Being" which has quantity and dimensions; /75/ He is circumscribed and occupies space. From here the idea of good angels is only a step, and how easy it is for them to make it.

●776 If on this earth the smallest of rulers, the least of potentates, is surrounded by servants and slaves, could the Creator be without them? If those who form the court of a king are superior to the gouatigi, or "family heads," to the dougoutigi, or "village heads," and to the kafotigi, or "heads of cantons," would those who form the celestial court be inferior to men, to genii, or to demons? The conclusion is perfectly natural; they would be superior to the latter, and to what will he /the Bambara/ compare them? Since they always in every way use themselves as a basis for comparison, they have only to think of themselves in order to remain logical in their conception of the world and to attribute to these beings the nature of their souls, their dousou, which they also call son. Is this not what they have done? When the Bambara define their idea of the soul and want to be understood, have they any other word than this very one, méléké, which they use to designate the angels? It is clear that they do not owe their concept [177] of heaven and the angels to the Moslems; they have appropriated from a foreign language a word which corresponded to a concept they already had, and that is all.

However, I am told that they have only one word to designate 776 177 192 196 the Divinity, the Only God, and that word is the Islamic term itself, Alla. They have no other, and the first missionaries, doubtless through ignorance of the pagans' hatred of the Moslems, adopted it, thus creating a hindrance to their ministry (1). Yes, Alla is the term

197 1. By translating as Alla both God and our concept of the Divinity, the first missionaries failed to establish the profound division which should exist between Catholicism and Islamism. The pagans regard the Catholic and the Moslem, as cousins, if not as brothers, and the word Alla is not irrelevant to this view. Because the Catholics believe in the Old Testament, they seem in the eyes of the Negro to border on Islamism, and the departure from it into Christianity

197 seems to them like membership in a sect derived directly from Islamism. The Moslems help with all their might to further belief in this nonsense. Therefore the missionaries should delete from their catechisms the word Alla for "God," as well as the ridiculous word mori for "priest," the word néma for "grace," etc., etc. -- in a word, all that is not Bambara.

176 177 192 196 they use in everyday language when they speak of God, but in the beginning did they not have another, and do they not still have one at present? /76/

I have always been surprised at the Negro's readiness to call a divine blessing by the name of its Author, and when in the winter he receives the blessing of blessings, the rain that makes plants sprout and the harvest grow, this is the way he expresses himself: "Alla bi fign, Alla bi na, Alla bi kouloukoulou, Alla bi yégé yégé, Alla do, etc., God darkens, God comes, God rumbles, God flashes, it is God," etc. These are purely metaphoric expressions, which mean: "The clouds gather; it will rain; the thunder rumbles; there are flashes of lightning, it is the rain."

I have found these metaphors on their lips also with exactly the same meaning but this time in Bambara words: "Sa bi fign, sa bi na, sa bi kouloukoulou, sa bi yégé yégé, sa do," the meaning is likewise: "The clouds gather; it will rain; the thunder rumbles; there are flashes of lightning; it is the rain." The word sa is strictly Bambara and so cannot reasonably be regarded as more recent than the Arab word; the Negroes therefore had it before they knew the word Alla. The word did not mean "cloud," "thunder," "lightning," or "rain," and there is every reason to believe that there was a time when it awakened in their minds a concept identical with that which the word Alla awakens in them at present, and that this word Alla from a foreign language is only used to express a concept long held by them.

776 What is the meaning of the word sa? Could it be the original
196 name of the Divinity? Since certain Bantu tribes have a high regard for snakes and dedicate a cult to them, some Europeans have wanted to see in it a translation of the word "snake." That is a great and fundamental error. The word sa, "snake," and the word sa in the sentences sa bi fign, sa bi na, etc., may have the same spelling, but
[194] the pronunciation is different. The hard "s" of sa, "snake," is pronounced by opening the teeth slightly and protruding the lips, and the word sa in sa bi fign, etc., is pronounced by closing the teeth and pulling in the lips. Thus, these are two quite distinct words. Moreover, to claim the snake is, or has been, the Bambara divinity seems to me a piece of stupidity. If they do not claim any bond of real or physical kinship even with the animals that are their taboo, one must believe a fortiori that they would not claim /77/ an animal, even a snake, as Creator and sovereign Lord. Some Bambara have it as a family taboo, and a branch of the Mande people have such great respect for the python Minia (1) that now they are known only by the

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1. The Baganda of Uganda before they became Christian venerated the snake as the dwelling place of a demon. Their snake has a great resemblance to the animals that are family taboos for the Bambara, or better still, to the python Minia, taboo of the Mande branch commonly known under the name of Minia-n-ka. Since the Minia-n-ka derive their name from the word Minia, name of the snake that is venerated and an object of public worship, some have insisted that the Bambara or Bamana derive their name from the word Bama, meaning "cayman" /a species of alligator/. If the cayman, Bama in

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the Bambara language, had given its name to the people, this animal would be taboo for them, as the Minia is taboo for the Minianka, and the Mani or Mali, the hippopotamus, is taboo for the Malinke. None of this is true of the cayman in Bambara country; it is in no way the taboo of the tribe. Moreover, the word Bamana could just as well come from the word bama, a kind of tench /a fresh-water fish of the carp family/ which is found in abundance in the Bani and the Niger. This idea has not occurred to the partisans of the cayman, who undoubtedly are not familiar with the fish called bama. The word Bambara comes from the word bamba which means "rebel" and, in the mouths of the Moslems, carries the meaning of Kafri. Bambara means "the rebel who has never submitted to Islam," and the Negroes of the west speak of Bamako or Bambako, "the river of the rebels." Father Copte, a student of the Bambara recognized by the Negroes of the Ségou, quickly understood this fact and noted it in his accounts in the Annals of the White Fathers. Mr. De Lafosse, an administrator most conversant with the native laws, customs, and ways, recognized it also, and I share their opinion concerning the name Bambara.

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name of Minia-n-ka, the people of the Minia snake. But have the Minianka ever worshipped, or do they still worship, the snake as their

776 God, their supreme deity? They are not that stupid, the snake is an
196 ordinary taboo, the dwelling place of a genie, an infernal spirit or a demon, and nothing more.

The word sa in the sentences sa bi fign, sa do, etc. ("the clouds gather, it is the rain," etc.), has a broad and vague meaning, indicating everything that is on high, everything that is above us. Was this word in the past the very name of the Divinity, as the word Alla is for many today? I do not think so. The word sa was the veiled term used to speak of the Divinity and, like the word Alla, it originally expressed a concept or an idea, and not a "being" at all.

Since, according to Bambara ideas, God is a spirit dwelling above us with His court and angels, the expressions sa bi na, sa bi /78/ fign, sa bi kouloukoulou, sa-dji, etc., should be interpreted to mean: "Min bé sa-n-fé bi na, Min bé sa-n-fé bi fign, Min bé sa-n-fé bi kouloukoulou, Sa-n-fe ta dji -- He Who (the spirit which) is up above comes (will favor us with His blessing of rain); He Who is above darkens (gathers clouds); He Who is above rumbles (makes His voice heard); the water of Him Who is above."

776 The supreme blessing that the Divinity, the Supreme Being,
196 grants to human beings, is rain. As I shall demonstrate in a moment,
192 the Bambara were unable to speak the name of their God and in their gratitude used a metaphor. Their fact that their metaphor, Alla bi na, Alla bi fign, is identical to the one in which the word sa appears, i.e., sa bi na, sa bi fign, etc., leads me to think, nay forces me to think, that in the beginning the word Alla expressed less an individual or a being than an idea or a concept. For I must confess that although some of our Bambara have the very ideas of the Moslems concerning God and the word Alla, there are more whose ideas on this subject remain confused, and for the majority God or Alla is nothing more than the arch of heaven (1), a covering which hides from us a "Spirit,"

1. To pagan Negroes, God is a spirit Who is everywhere, sees everything, but remains ens quantum. He dwells on high, is as large as the celestial vault, and because He hovers above us

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> sees everything. The old men explain this to you with an intensity that proves their good faith, and children recite the sayings of the old men with a frankness so naive that one cannot misunderstand it.

a Being endowed with reason and all powerful. The term is the translation of the word sa.

It is apparent that in the beginning the word Alla in no way meant a Being or an Individual; it simply expressed a concept, an idea already known, accepted and translated by the word sa, and the Bambara simply adopted a foreign word corresponding to their own concept.

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If to the Bambara the word Alla had meant the Divinity Himself, the Supreme Being, would they ever have dared to speak it, to make it their own? I cannot bring myself to believe that they would, among them the name of a powerful person, a religious chief, or venerated being is never spoken in vain or in an unsuitable manner. If some of their kings, among them /19/ N'golo, not to mention others, punished anyone caught speaking his /the royal/ name by fines and prison, cast them into slavery, and even beheaded them as guilty of the crime of lese majesty, what would they not have to fear from the Creator if they spoke His name in vain and inappropriately! Furthermore, it is a widespread custom to avoid speaking the name of one who is feared or venerated.

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No well-bred and self-respecting woman ever speaks the name of her husband. She speaks of him as né tigi ("my master"), so tigi ("the master of the house"). Most frequently she adorns him with a borrowed name, a bougna toua, or name of respect, and a polygamist has several such names, each wife giving him one of her own invention.

In well-brought-up families -- and most of them are (1) -- the

> 1. Our Bambara Negroes have great respect for the members of their families and are considerate of them;

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Djasé instead of Nama or Namakoro. The Nama is sometimes surrounded by a wall instead of mats. This is extremely unusual, and I have seen only one sanctuary of this kind, at Dougoutigila in the Bani /region/.

of the Komo is of iron, so one says: "An bi nége son, we are sacrificing to the iron." A fetish can give health in the sense that it can refrain from causing sickness if it is a gnâ, or it can actually give health and well-being if it is a gnéna; thus the expression used most frequently is: "An ta foura bi son, we are sacrificing to our cure," or again: "An ta foura bi djigi so, our cure is paying us the honor of a visit."

776 Are we here dealing with a recent custom, which dates from the arrival of the Moslem? I cannot accept this idea, for all the evidence indicates that it antedates presence, I believe without hesitation that the name of the Divinity or Supreme Being was never spoken by the Bambara, that they were not permitted to pronounce it. It is not surprising, then, that the name should gradually have been lost, erased from their memories so that it is unknown at present.

Moreover, since the Bambara God was without priest, altar, or sacrifice, was there any need to speak His name? According to their ideas, the gnéna or djiné are beings intermediate between men and angels, put in charge of the elements by the Divinity and delegated by Him to distribute His favors and His punishments to human beings; would it then be foolish and presumptuous to believe that since the beginning he only addressed God through the mediation of the gnéna or djiné? I cannot doubt that the Bambara implored the djiné to present their homage and worship to their Lord, the Lord of the whole universe, to their Tigi ani fen bé tigi yé, as the sorcerers always say in their liturgical ceremonies. The latter are the watchful guardians of the ancient formulas and customs; that is the source of all their prestige.

Moreover, the worship of the gnéna, or djiné, antedates that of the gnâ (boli or sétané). It has no history; its origin is lost in the darkness of the ages, and in this fact I see a new reason to believe that they were the first intermediaries between man and God.

773 of a race, but not words that denote the first father and mother of the
829 human species. A pure Bambara does not believe in the unity of mankind; God created the white man white and the black man black, to use his expression, and to each He has given a father and a mother of his own color.

829 Nor has the arrival of the Europeans and the Moslems changed
582 any of his ideas in this respect. For many, each tribe and each caste had a first father and a first mother, and if there are castes which cannot be united by marriage, this seems to me to be the reason. "An té sé, a yé noumoy yé an yé Bamana déou yé an té si (1) kélé-n-yé,

1. Si: "similar" or "like nature;" "of the same race, descent, origin, people, nature."

we cannot marry each other, he is noumou (blacksmith) and we are not of the same people, the same blood, the same stock, the same father." Some seem to me very explicit when they say: "An té fa kélé-n-yé, we are not of the same father." /84/

Chapter 5

000 Fetishism among the Bambara; The Worship of the Gnéna Classification of the Gnéna, Who are Identical with the Arab Djiné

1. What is Meant by Gnéna or Djiné

776 The Supreme Being, the Bambara God, lives up above behind the blue sky, gliding through happy and quiet days with his celestial band, the good angels (méléké) that form His court, and, omnipotent though He is, He is without priest or sacrifice. For He concerns Himself very little with men. He has divided the dominion of creation with the djiné, His laws, which are immutable, He has decreed once

776 and for all, and since then He has simply lived, resting in sweet "idleness" .... Let us not think, however, that the Negro is without religion; he is excessively religious and he spends his life sacrificing, squandering flour, and scattering the blood of victims uselessly, for the sole benefit of vultures.

Believing that he can expect nothing from God, he calls upon the djiné or gnéna who are in charge of the elements, each having absolute power in its sphere. Doubtless the latter are unable to change the whole universal order established by the Creator and Soverign Lord of all things -- au tigi ("our Lord") ani fen /85/ bé tigi yé ("and Lord of all things") --, but they can grant a material (1) blessing, turn away

[782] 1. A Negro does not have the idea of asking a supernatural blessing.

a misfortune, and reward or punish.

The gnéna is reminiscent of the djin of the Koran (Chap. VI, XXX, VIII, XLI). It is a being intermediate between men and angels. "Ma si fa do do, it is a kind of man," say the Negroes, and in fact it does resemble a man since it eats, drinks, amuses itself, marries, and has children. /2/ Many even believe them /gnéna/ to be clothed,

2. In the sacrifices it is called ma, "man," and the name of the object in which it is found is added to this word. Thus ma djala ba, "great false-cedar man," etc. /No text reference to this footnote. Tr:/

and in the late evening it is not unusual to hear a storyteller /conteur/ say of them: "Sanou b'oufé. Wari b'oufé. Bagi fana b'oufé. They have gold. They have silver. They also have fabrics." Above all they have might! They are powerful, and although some people wear 776 751 little bags of cloth or leather and strings with seven and nine knots -- as amulets --, and claws of wild animals, deer and goats horns, tafo

of leather wrapped in the hide of an anteater or monkey, etc. -- as talismans -- which protect them from their blows; although there are diviners, sorcerers, and certain hunters and blacksmiths (noumou), etc., on whom these invisible beings have no hold, it is nonetheless true that they are feared, held in awe by all, that they are honored and their good graces sought. Moreover, they give good luck, good fortune, and success to their friends and preserve them from a host of evils -- spells, sorcery, poverty, sickness, etc. -- springing from an enemy's rancor.

The worship of the gnéna, beings intermediate between angels and men, is among the oldest. Its origin is lost in the dark of the ages, and, unlike that of the boli or gnâ, of which I will speak later, it has no history. Since they are not all equally strong and powerful, I have divided them into three main groups: those that live in the bush, those that roam in the villages and their environs, and finally those that are really interested in the Bambara and actually protect them. /3/ /86/

3. See Anthropos, Vol. III (1908), part 4 /J. M. Henry, "Le Culte des esprits chez les Bambara (Spirit Worship among the Bambara). There is no text reference to this footnote which appears on text page 85. Tr./

2. Gnéna Who Dwell in the Bush

These /gnéna/ hide in thickets and perch on trees, and they are terrible only during the day, at high noon and in the greatest heat. Woe to him who at that time disturbs them in their walks, climbs on the trees they have chosen for a home, or tries to prune the branches on which they are frolicking or resting. They do not like children at all! For these little vandals, always running and climbing to catch lizards, rob nests, and stuff themselves with fruit, they have reserved violent headaches and stomach-aches. Often, too, they make them lame, blind, deaf and dumb, crazy, etc., and there is no village where one is not shown some of their victims (1).

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1. To understand this belief of the Negro, read the chapter on sickness and death.

The most famous and terrible of all these invisible little beings of the bush, who are without official minister or priest but to whom many offerings nevertheless are made, is the wokolo. It is black as soot, with a skin like a monkey's, and no larger than an infant of one or two months. It likes to appear, and one can say that no Negro reaches thirty without having seen it. Although sometimes during the most severe heat or in the evening by the light of the moon, it runs along the banks of the river, throwing into the stream its tiny line, almost invisible and finer than a hair, it prefers the bush and the butter tree; the karité (Bassia parkii) is its prime favorite. With quiver slung over its shoulder and bow always strung, it lies in wait, and woe betide anyone who comes by and disturbs it. To defeat it and force it to beat a retreat, the one who comes upon it must greet it as soon as he sees it, but usually it is invisible and shoots him with its arrow, an arrow so small that he does not even feel it penetrate the flesh. It is this [153] arrow that causes the deep pussy abscesses (2) from which our Negroes

2. Like all superstitious and weak-minded people, the Negro believes that he has actually seen what are but imaginary dreams and wishes.

suffer.

Many of these invisible beings have no name. The least sociable are those that live in the false cedars, for to subdue them /87/ one must be a noumou (blacksmith), a koulé (digger of canoes, mender of gourds), etc. Only such persons dare to deal the first stroke of the ax to these trees and cut them down (1).

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1. Before doing so they recite a formula, and the first stroke of the ax is dealt by the chief of the blacksmiths, etc., or his deputy.

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3. Gnéna Who Roam the Village and Its Environs

These gnéna like especially to sit where paths cross and somewhat resemble the gnâma, even though they are different (2). They

2. See what I said about the gnâma in the first chapter.

protect from spells and sorcery, give health and exorcise sickness, and it is not unusual in the morning at daybreak or in the evening just as the sun is about to disappear to see men and especially old women sprinkling a little clear water here and there at a crossing of paths. They are interceding for children and grandchildren or for a member of the family who is sick and lying on his mat, or they are imploring the gnéna to protect them from an enemy or an evil spell, or to shelter them from the gnâma.

776 782 Although these gnéna have no official priest, they nevertheless receive many gifts, and there is no circumcised man who does not feel obliged to make them his small offering, at one time or another. At crossings of paths one throws them preferably flour mixed with water, cowrie shells, milk, hatching eggs, ashes of herbs and plants, gruel, kola nuts, and sorghum cakes. At children's festivals the fodder is thrown to them in greater abundance; the cakes pile up at the entrance of the village (to the great joy of dogs and hens), and the ground is moistened with a light dew of blood (3). On the second day of the

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3. All these offerings are made by the order of a sorcerer and are called saraka. See what I have said about the saraka in Chapter IV, Section I, "Belief in God."

drinking bout, which corresponds to the festival of the كَبِنَنْ (sheep), the soli girls, who are shortly to be excised, throw them the remains of the basi k'li in great handfuls without counting. Basi k'li is the name given to the repast provided for the whole village on this

776 day by the soli (those who are to be excised). It is a kind of semolina
782 (very fine couscous called basi) which is eaten with an /88/ extremely
304 spicy sauce of smoked fish. It is called basi k'li because, in order to
262 provide this repast, the little girls are obliged to run from door to door, clapping their hands, singing and begging (k'li).

Among the invisible wanderers, there is one which is strongly
776 reminiscent of our "werewolf." It is the souroukou, an imaginary
825 hyena, whose supposed existence has brought about a strange practice.
514 Every evening one sees groups of little boys and groups of little girls, turning aside a little into the bush: they all go in a band to take their last precautions and attend to the wants of nature -- union is strength even against the gnéna.

776 Many other gnéna are among this group that roams the village; they flutter in the b'lon, or entrance huts, they live in horrible filth, hung over doors, on the walls, and on the posts that support the terrace roofs, and the only hangings to be seen anywhere are eggshells, heads of millet, fruit pits, and seeds from the bush, which are offered to these friends as saraka. Nor are private huts without them, for the gnéna roll in the ashes of the hearth, snore on the mats, and take the air in the conari (1); there are some everywhere.

[415] 1. The conari is a baked earth receptacle used for water, beer, and cooking food.

Finally, there are gnéna or djiné who are powerful. Without mercy for their enemies, whom they abandon to all kinds of sorcery and evil spells, they are full of both attention and consideration for their friends. They can cause sickness, poverty, and other calamities to descend on a family, a village, or a whole region; but they can also side with them against a visible or invisible enemy; they can protect them, exorcise anything, and grant real blessings to each and all. The characteristic trait of the gnéna, in fact, is not that they can refrain from doing harm, but that they can also do good directly by performing a good act. Some choose to live in a rock, others prefer a knoll or a large tree near the village, and there are those who

776 do not disdain to frolic in the bottom of a well or pond and keep cool there. These last are put in charge of the elements in a very special way. Although endowed /89/ with a divine virtue, they are still far from gods and are only intermediaries between human beings and the Divinity. This last idea seems to be in the background, almost disappearing, and yet, if one has the patience to listen to the old men and let them express themselves, one quickly sees that they still have it, even though ill defined and very confused, and one can believe that in the beginning the worship of the gnéna was a direct worship, offered to the Divinity through their mediation. Men, women, children, everybody takes part in the worship of the gnéna; although there is one, koté (kouéré in Bani), whose mysteries are veiled, its sect is only semioccult, and the entire population takes part in the festivals held in its honor. Barring a formal order from the sorcerers or the 776 822 impossibility of obtaining items in the liturgical (1) color, everything

1. The reason for a failure to conform to the liturgy is always announced before a saraka or a sacrifice.

used in this worship -- victims, kola nuts -- is white, and among the Negroes white is the symbol of innocencé and purity.

776 "Primitive peoples admit the existence of superhuman powers," 782 says Nicolay. "When these are supposed to inhabit certain objects in the form of spirits, genii, etc., that is animism." /*/ This

/* Fernand Nicolay, Curiosite's des lois et coutumes - Histoire des croyances, superstitions, moeurs, usages et coutumes (selon le plan du Décalogue) /Curiosities among Laws and Customs. The History of Beliefs, Superstitions, Ways, Practices, and Customs (according to the outline of the Decalogue). Vol. I, prop. 13. Paris: V. Retaux, 1901./

776 definition fits closely with what we have said about the gnéna, and the
782 worship of these genii is indeed animism and not idolatry. And since, according to Burton, fetishism is less adoration than a propitiation of animate or inanimate objects to which a mysterious power is attributed, the sacrifices and saraka offered by the Bambara to their genii are acts of propitiation rather than of worship.

776 To give the reader a more precise notion of the worship of the gnéna -- and they are legion -- I will divide the powerful ones, those of the third group, into eight categories: the genii of ponds, springs, and wells; the genii of the crops; those who protect children; and those who protect circumcised youths; the genii of the women, that of twins; the dasiri, protector of villages; and the koté or kouéré, a special genie of a semioccult sect. All these genii have their priests, their sacrifices, and their saraka, but since all are not equal in strength and power, the extensiveness and formality of worship is not the same with respect to all. /90/

4. Genie of Ponds, Springs, and Wells

776 There are genii splashing around in all ponds, springs, and wells,
782 and our Negroes think that in order to obtain their good graces they
823 are obliged from time to time to offer them a trickle of /millet/ flour and water, the blood of a white hen, or a mouthful of chewed kola nut. On the edge of a well, at the mouth of a spring, on the edge of a pond, and finally on the banks of a river, offerings, sacrifices, and saraka are made, and their purpose is to prevent our Kneippist genii from escaping. If they leave displeased they take with them the water without which people cannot live, and the spring dries. There is total drought, a terrible misfortune -- for what can become of them without water!

The sacrificer to the water genii is quite often the head of the family on whose land the spring is located. Usually this honor goes by right to the head of the quarter; there are even villages where the sacrificer is none other than the religious head of the village, the gnéna-n-sonnoba /sic/, who is priest of the dasiri, the genie protector of the village.

776 782 823 Most frequently these genii are given saraka, but a hen is sacrificed each time the wells are cleaned; it is in good taste to do so, and few villages depart from the rule. Once a year a public sacrifice is offered to them, with a degree of formality that varies according to whether the sacrificer is merely the head of a family, the head of a quarter, or the head of the village. Since the women spend a good half of their lives around the wells, they are almost everywhere the ones who provide the materials for the sacrifice.

5. Genii of the Crops

776 241 782 When planting time comes, the Bambara, who are farmers above all, blossom out with sacrifices and redden just about everything with blood. The head of the family does not forget the genie of the seed. He offers it a saraka at home and sometimes a sacrifice, and unless he is very old and helpless he appears at the field on the day when the first pinch of seed is consigned to the earth. Before /91/ the /sowing/ is begun a hen's blood must be offered to the genie of fertility, which is responsible for watching over the seed and causing it to sprout and grow, and it is he that makes this offering, unless he has delegated this duty to his eldest son or his brother (the one next after him in seniority).

The departure for the field at planting time has its own unique characteristics. A child (if there is one in the family, obviously) is given the gourd (1) containing the seed, and in the name of the genie

1. A pumpkin cut in two, emptied and dried in the sun.

the father gives him orders and admonitions. On the way out of the hut the child pays his respects to the shades of his ancestors by placing the gourd on the threshold, and leaves quickly, proud as Artaban. He must be careful not to stop on the way unless he has to, and, above all, he must keep silent so that the spirits that fly here, there, and everywhere remain ignorant of what he is carrying and cannot attack the seeds in the millet grain. Anyone who talks runs a grave

776 risk of spoiling the crop -- o be gno soun tigné ("it destroys the vitality
241 of the seed of the millet grain").
782 These genii do not have special festivals in the course of the year. Their priests, the heads of families, offer them saraka and sacrifices at planting time, and some of them sacrifice a hen in the corner of the field while the crop is sprouting and growing, but that is all.

6. Genii Protectors of Children

889 It is not until circumcision that Bambara children take part in
794 the mysteries of pagan worship, but they are early prepared for it so
776 that they may be introduced to the law of secrecy which they must strictly adhere to later when they are initiates of an occult sect. At about the age of seven or eight years, they become affiliated with an association worshipping the genii responsible for protecting them. All these sects are alike, differing only in name. On the banks of the
[625] Bani and the Niger, the object of worship is the tauri (toad or frog), and the croaking of this animal is imitated in their festivals; some villages have the djara (lion) and imitate its roar by whirling their
[534] slingshots, small boards four fingers wide and one to two centimeters long, attached to the end of a string. The most widespread /children's
[824] genie/ is n'tomo, which undoubtedly gets its name from the tree in which it lives (the /92/ jujube tree, n'tomo). It makes children hale and hearty, preserves them from sickness, defends them against the invisible little creatures of the bush, against spells and sorcery, and makes them strong, steadfast, and impervious to suffering.

The confraternity of the n'tomo is modeled after that of the boli. (This is true of both kinds -- for there are two; a white costume is worn to the dance for n'tomo djé and a black costume for n'tomo fign). In order to be admitted one must offer a hen to the child who is head of the n'tomo (the n'tomotigi), prostrate oneself before the tree of the genie, and swear to keep the secret and never to speak of the n'tomo to the uninitiated, especially not to little girls.

796 the sacrifice is furnished by the children themselves; all of them to-
857 gether work a small field for this purpose during the winter, and if the harvest is not sufficient, they go begging from door to door so that nothing will be lacking at the feast -- neither d'lo, the millet beer, nor kola nuts. On the evening of this great day, each new initiate chooses his n'golo mouso, as they call the little girl each one takes as his "sister of the heart," his bonne amie as one would say in France /his girlfriend/. But she is more; she is a little maid of all work, and the gift which he gives her every year at the celebration is more a payment than a gift of friendship, "pure and simple." /94/

7. The Genie Protector of Circumcised Youths

794 At circumcision the Bambara leave the association of the n'tomo
776 and place themselves under the protection of more powerful genii.
778 These genii are all of the same nature, only the name differs with each region, and all the confraternities are copied after one and the same model. The most widespread is that of the n'golo (1).

1. In Bani it is the n'goso rather than the n'golo.

The n'golo is nothing but two forked branches fastened together and hung on a light dloma (2). One can meet it quite often in a

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2. Dloma are forked sticks on which rest the crossbars or beams that hold up the flat terrace roofs. The name dloma is given to all forked sticks, small and large.

corner of the village, out of doors, but usually it is under a small shed or hut. This genie gives the youths not only strength, vigor, and health, but also the talent, if not of pleasing women, at least of attracting them and thus being able to obtain some crude satisfactions. It helps the unmarried to meet the girl of the moment, and thanks to it,

794 a married man finds his wife gentle, submissive, and obedient. It
776 preserves the members from disgraceful ailments and, in a quite
778 special manner, from ma ko sa (3), a paralysis of the reproductive

3. Ma, "man"; ko, "affair," "parts," "testicles"; sa, "dead," "lifeless."

organ.

794 This group of worshippers forms the foundation of the organization of the fla-n-to (4), headed by the to-n-tigi (5) who is the master of

4. To, "gruel"; fla, "for"; flani, "twins of the same age."

5. To, "gruel"; tigi, "head."

the n'golo fetish. His assistants before the genie help him with his duties; he has a siéré, or aide, a djéli, who is a kind of herald and repeats his orders, advice, and thanks during the days of celebration and drinking bouts, and a djalatiké, responsible for seeing that the rules or laws of the organization are kept. Among the Negroes nothing is done without drinking and eating; they must have celebrations and drinking bouts, and in order to obtain the means for them the fla-n-to impose a large number of fines on their members, the to-n-dé (6).

6. To; "gruel"; "child."

Their rules are /95/ nevertheless odd. For example, a fine is imposed on whoever blows his nose or sneezes, gets up from the table, or starts eating before commanded to do so by the head, the tontigi. Those who are late for the dance or sleep during the day or night of a celebration are granted no mercy! (1)

1. When the tondé organize a dance or celebration, everyone must be present and spend a sleepless night.

794 The to-n-dé, or members of the association, are formed into groups, each corresponding to a circumcision, and all these groups, united among themselves by a common bond, which is the worship to be rendered to the n'golo genie, submit to and obey the head, the n'golo tigi, preferably called to-n-tigi. Thanks to this unity, a host of quarrels and fights is avoided, and they all help each other, sharing in the joys and sorrows of their fellow members. In a word, this association corresponds, in miniature, to our societies of mutual assistance and help.

794 796 To get a girl of the moment, the young to-n-dé from time to time sacrifice a small pullet. But a big sacrifice is made yearly and the victim is at least a goat; it is offered in the name of all. The offering of the general sacrifice does not prevent each initiate from adding a hen and a kola nut; food abounds, millet beer flows in streams, the association furnishes food and drinks to the whole village and to friends from surrounding villages. On this day also the youths circumcised during the year enter the confraternity of the n'golo and become to-n-de, or members of the organization of the fla-n-to. To do so they must spend from 80 to 120 cowrie shells (2 to 3 sous) and offer to the fetish the hen and two kola nuts as a sacrifice.

8. The Women's Genie

796 834 Not all villages possess this fetish tree, which is called mouso ka djiri (2), but all hamlets have a genie whose chief function is to

2. This tree is often a fig tree called n'zoro or a toro sycamore (ficus vogeli, ficus ferruginosa). Mouso means "woman"; ka is particle indicating possession; djiri means "tree"; the whole phrase therefore means "the tree of the women."

776 preserve the freshness of youth in the ladies for a long time, to give
824 mothers breasts that are loaded with /96/ milk, to bring fertility to the sterile, and finally to keep an eye on the periods, or menses, of each and every one. Every month at the new moon the excised women,
776 married and unmarried, spend an entire night dancing in its honor,
535 to the beat of a special drum called mouso denou (1). These dances
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1. Mouso, "woman"; denou, "drum."

are not very decent, and except for some shameless individuals who watch even these scenes from the height of the flat terrace roofs, the men among the Bani stay at a distance.

776 Many villages (and they are numerous in Bani country) believe
824 that the genie takes shelter in a fig tree near the walls and establishes its home there. It is the trunk of this tree that is reddened with blood at the annual festival, and most of the dances take place in its shade, as does the repast of which the Negro women partake on this occasion. The girls excised during the year spend 80 to 120 cowrie shells, offer a pullet for the sacrifice, and are thereafter permitted to pay their respects to the genie.

794 Out of this group of worshippers arises a small mutual aid society, identical in every way with the youth's association, the fla-n-to. The head of this organization is usually the oldest woman of the village, and she is given the title of massa, "queen." All the female population call her mba, "my mother."

This society, called mouso-n-to (2), from time to time offers

2. Mouso, "woman"; to, "gruel."

the people of the village d'lo, or millet beer, and once a year at the festival of the genie a plentiful repast with a dessert of kola nuts for the old and the usual drinking bout for everyone. Those who break the laws of the association are fined, and the sum of all these fines, together with the 80 or 120 cowrie shells spend by the excised girls of the year, help the massa and her associates to meet all expenses.

9. The Twins' Genie

845 776 Having twins is far from an unmixed blessing for Bambara women. Those whom I have seen afflicted with this good fortune and honor (for it is one, since it is regarded as /97/ a blessing from the Supreme Being, the Creator) have seemed to me greatly inconvenienced by their two babies. The healthier, stronger and more robust of the two relaxes pleasantly on the mother's back, while the one who needs a little care always gets his belly squashed on one shoulder or the other.

845 776 778 435 The genie of twins lives in a kind of hourglass made of two plates of braided grass; a bit of iron or wood onto which a piece of the umbilical cord has been rolled is hung from the centers. This fetish is called a sinsin and costs the f[illegible] between 1 ba and 1 ba 200 cowrie shells (between 800 and 1200 cowrie shells, or 20 to 25 sous), not including, of course, the hens and kola nuts given to the sinsin tigi (1), more commonly called sinsin d'la tigi (2). To make this

1. Sinsin, the fetish bearing this name; tigi, "master," "owner."

2. Sinsin, the fetish; d'la, "maker"; tigi, "master," "He who manufactures the sinsin."

/98/ horror, which is hung in the entrance hut within an inverted gourd (1), one must own a father sinsin fetish and know the rites and

1. This gourd protects the sinsin from the teeth of rodents.

formulas.

A sacrifice to the sinsin is performed every year by the head of the family, who is himself its priest; the sacrifice continues to be made even in case of the death of the twins, because it is the

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778 peculiarity of this fetish that it continues to live in its hourglass as
778 long as a particle of this object remains.

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Young Bambara holding the sinsin, the fetish of twins

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431 This fetish protects the mother of the twins, and unites the latter in such close affection that one never receives a gift without sharing it with the other. I would even go so far as to say that it is in good taste never to offer anything to one without offering as much to the other, and when they are given something, the first to be favored is the last born, who is considered by everyone as the older.

845 778 431 If one of the twins dies early in life, as usually happens, the survivor receives a statuette which he keeps all his life with jealous care and to which he gives the name of the deceased. He dresses it to the best of his ability, often covers it with glass trinkets, such as bangles, beads, bits of amber, rings, etc., and well-bred people never give him a gift without adding at least 5 cowrie shells for the statuette.

845 778 825 The sinsin also grants twins a curious privilege. A scorpion not only cannot bite them, it is even at their service, and on their order will bite a fellow who has displeased them.

845 778

A twins' doll.

845 551 It is easy to recognize twins (flani in Bambara) as they have special names, the commonest being Sinna, Maféné, Gno, and Ouassa. /99/

10. The Genie Protector of Villages

776 621 The genie protector of a village lives on a knoll or a rock; almost always, if not invariably, its home is a baobab or false cedar near the walls, in a little grove intersected by neat paths, well kept and often raked.

Such a spirit is the exclusive property of one family, and even bears its name, or diamou. Its sacrificer, called gnéna-n-sonnaba, also bears the name of dougoutigi (1); he is, in fact, the real head of

1. Gnena, "fetish," "genie"; sonnaba, "great sacrificer"; dougou, "village"; tigi, "head," "master."

Typical Bambara headman.

the village. Although at present the civil and religious authorities are separate in many places, the gnéna-n-sonnaba, or religious priest, always holds precedence, and self-respecting people call him dougoutigi (head of the village), giving the title of sotigi (2) to the

2. So, "hut," "house"; tigi, "head."

one who has only civil authority. Here we have further evidence that the organization of the Bambara nation was, at its origin purely religious. The separation of the two authorities in certain hamlets can easily be understood.

Under the Bambara dynasty the kingdom of Ségou was divided into provinces, cantons, and villages. The king, Fama or Massa

796 A great sacrifice to the spirit protector of the village, the
825 dasiri, is made every year. The spirit always has a mount such as
782 a snake, a rat, a lizard, a donkey, etc.; almost everywhere the mount is a terrible billy goat that roams through the village, enters everywhere, eats everything, and breaks everything without paying attention to the switch. For at least three days at the time of the sacrifice, the village makes merry; men, women, and children dance, stuff themselves with food, and drink and get drunk.

796 Just as everyone takes part in the feasting and drinking, so all
782 participate in the sacrifice, even the women, who at least go to the edge of the sacred grove, though they do not enter. And /101/ there is an abundance of everything: dégé, or /millet/ flour mixed with honey water and milk, d'lo, or millet beer, and finally meats. At least a goat, and sometimes a bull, is killed for the whole village, and the heads of families offer goats and hens, depending their wealth.

782 In addition to the sacrifices offered once a year and those offered
778 by a family when one of the children marries, the fetish receives
776 homage and tribute from just about everyone. Sterile women and those who habitually miscarry offer it many hens and fawn upon the animal that is its mount. If one gives birth to a baby, one consecrates it to the fetish, calling it dji-ri-ba ("great tree"), gnéna ma ké (gnéna, "genie"; ma, "man"; ké, "male"), or gnéna ma (gnéna, "genie"; ma, "man"). They even like to add the name of the village where the bountiful dasiri is found: Kolotomo gnéna ma (1). /102/

1. Kolotomo, the name of a village about 30 kilometers from Ségou; gnena, "genie"; ma, "man."

(man or daughter of the dasiri genie of Kolotomo). Actually, the name gnénama is given only to girls; for boys the word ké ("male") is added: gnénama-ké.

776 It is known through the mediation of sorcerers that a dasiri
778 sometimes leaves its sacred grove and its tree. This event is unusual;
824 the tree may fall from old age, but the sacrifices will be continued

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778 on the stump, the open hole, or on the sprout that comes out of the
824 ground, grows, and replaces the tree.

776 Every dasiri has a sacred mount which bears its name and, as
778 I have already said, it seems to prefer a billy goat above all. The
825 latter dies of old age, that is, unless the good of the community dictates otherwise; I saw one perish in the prime of life because of

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A dasiri fetish tree (of Songobougou).

its scandalous behavior; he was inordinately fond of the ewes of the village, which he mistook for goats, and this behavior was far too shameless for a sacred being.

776 The fetish protects the village by causing the evil spells and
778 sorcery cast on it to misfire. It defends the village against wicked
621 people and against its enemies, and thanks to it the inhabitants can
793 peacefully devote themselves to their work in the fields. While averting plagues and diseases which decimate the population, it gives strength, health, and vigor to all, and finally it populates the village by making the women fertile. Above all, it is the source of unity among families for it brings them all together under the authority of a single head; the friends of the head of the family whose name, or diamou, it bears, are its friends, and his enemies are also its own. To fail the priest, the gnéna-n-sonnaba, the dougoutigi, is to fail the fetish, so close and intimate is the union between the two.

11. The Koté, or Koré, Genie

794 Since it is the fundamental basis of power and authority, the
776 worship of the dasiri can, with some justice, be regarded as the first
778 and oldest of all Bambara religious practices. That of the koté, or koré, likewise seems to me quite respectable from this standpoint and just as old. As a matter of fact, this spirit, like the dasiri, lives in
[824] a little grove near the village, and the three trees it likes to inhabit are the baobab, the false cedar, and the nettle tree.

794 The worship of the koré is especially popular in Bani country. Today not all the villages have the fetish, but all have at /103/ least a few initiates belonging to this semioccult sect. The sect includes women among its members; it is divided into eight groups, each ruled by its oldest member, who in turn is under the authority of the koretigi, the supreme head of the association.

794 At the time of the annual sacrifices, and especially at the
778 sacrifices made every seven years on the days of admission (for it is necessary to be a koré dé (1) in order to participate in the secret part

1. Koré, the fetish bearing this name; dé, "son."

794 The koré fetish watches over the crops and gives its initiates the
776 only pleasures that they know and desire -- to drink, to eat, and to enjoy /104/ a woman -- and, as will later be demonstrated, all this comes out in their dances and orgies. In spite of its great power, the poor genie cannot handle its many concerns; the Bambara, who judge everything according to themselves to such an extent that they inject their own organization into the world of invisible beings, have therefore given it eight groups of spirits who carry out its orders and make up its court. Some watch over the insignia and preserve the names of the initiates, and others render powerless anyone who would harm the crops. Just like a distinguished, powerful, and rich man here, the koré has its storyteller /griots/ or heralds, the korodouga, who sing its praises, transmit to it the petitions and prayers of the initiates, and dance its dances. The eight groups of the sect are simply the representation of this court, the concrete expression of the Negroes' concept of it.

794 The initiation into, or affiliation with, the koré sect takes place only every seven years. It is long and painful; for fifteen days the young initiates live in the sacred grove and cannot go into the village. Since they need some training for future dances, the old men come to torment them every noon in the worst heat, and each initiate, according to the group to which he belongs, suffers for some moments the torment of fire, thorns, or the rod.

[126] The rigor of the admission in no way alienates the Bambara, and in Bani it is a disgrace to refuse the hen for the sacrifice and the /payment of/ 120 cowrie shells, and not to join. It is true that everything is repaid, for the sect has many festivals and d'lo, or millet beer, is never lacking.

In addition to the annual sacrifice, a sacrifice is made to the genie every time an initiate dies. There is another sacrifice on the anniversary of his death, and during the dry season the kore dé go from one festival to another, spending their nights in nameless drinking bouts and orgies. /105/

Chapter 6

Worship, Celebrations, Saraka, Sacrifices, and Dances in Honor of the Gnéna

1. The First Two Groups of Gnéna

781 The fundamental bases of all Bambara devotions are first, and
●776 above all, fear and secondly, the desire to have everything without effort or work. The Bambara respect a strong, powerful being because it can punish and reward, and since their fetishes are not equal in power, they take care not to honor all equally.

776 The genii of the first two groups have no priest or official
782 minister, and public, solemn sacrifices are offered them very rarely.
852 In the dry season, however, some festivals are held in their honor. The chief participants are children, who on these days stuff themselves with /millet/ flour mixed with honey water and milk, and with sorghum cakes. When they are full they take the leftovers outside the village to a place where paths cross, and many hens, dogs, and other animals come for the booty. The poor and unfortunate also come, for
[735] they, too, may take their share; every saraka (1) belongs to them.

1. Tax, tribute, alms.

776 Little girls and boys take part in these festivals, but there is a
852 special one for unexcised girls, and those who are soon to be excised and are getting ready for this great event in Bambara life bear /106/ all the expenses. It is the celebration of soli basi k'li (1), of which I will speak at greater length in my chapter on circumcision.

1. Soli, "young girls who will soon be excised"; basi, a kind of couscous with very small grains which distantly resembles semolina; k'li, "obtained by singing and clapping hands."

000 I will speak at greater length in my chapter on circumcision.

776 782 Although the individual worship of the lesser genii by one person or family is seldom public -- except sometimes temporarily, it nonetheless involves an enormous waste of /millet/ flour, kola nuts, cotton, cowrie shells, etc. Nevertheless, there are very few sacrifices in these offerings; most frequently, if not always, they are saraka, or alms, and a kind of tax or tribute since they are obligatory.

782 791 They are, in fact, obligatory alms, paid by an individual, a family, or a whole quarter of a village, upon the command of a sorcerer. Some sorcerers who have renown or want to acquire it manage to prescribe these taxes for an entire village and, sometimes, even for a whole region. The occurence is not unusual; I have seen it happen every year. A shrewd operator from Bélé Koun in the circle of Sikasso, crosses the Bani in every dry season, and there is not a village in the circle of Ségou but feels called upon to hand hens and cowrie shells over to him and, in addition, afterwards to take a large contribution to one of the nearby crossroads. In spite of his youth -- [787] he is twenty-five or thirty at most -- he is said to learn everything by searching hens' entrails and crushing their viscera between his fingers. He makes profit by predicting terrible calamities everywhere. All his knowledge is summed up in the following words: "The genii are displeased, offer a saraka and offer it quickly, for if you do not, all children under three years old will die... goats, cows, horses, and sheep will die... springs will dry up... the karité butter will fail..., etc." In one place the words are those of a hyena, in another, those of a cow, and farther away it is a wild pig that speaks. And the dégé (/millet/ flour mixed with water) is spread and the blood of hens flows in streams. In short, the people are always expected to give to the fetishes and the sorcerers, and to give everything. Some occasionally balk and do not want to obey. The orders of the sorcerer become urgent, his prophesies more terrible than ever; at the end of his patience, he may spit out insults and /107/ curses, and then everyone comes to offer the saraka. Even Moslems let themselves be taken in.

782 In Bambara eyes, the saraka never has the character of a sacrifice. As I explained at length in speaking of the worship of God, it is always

782 There are many kinds of saraka, and they are offered for just
857 about all purposes. Besides those given by order of sorcerers, there are some established by custom itself, and uncircumcised children are required to carry them out. They often hunt turtles, /108/ palm rats, guinea fowl, and partridges, so they plant a strong dry branch either outside the village or even inside it, and on its branches hang the heads of captured animals and the shells of eggs they have sucked. This is their way of thanking the genii, of ensuring other successful hunts, and of protecting themselves from the gnâma of their many victims.

782 The Bambara also give the name of saraka to some practices that are purely and simply superstitious and do not, strictly speaking, have the character of religious worship. In these instances the word saraka must be given a broader meaning than that which I have attributed to it. The old shoes, caps, fruit rinds, rags, etc., hung here and there on branches of trees are not so much a rendering of homage by the Black to a genie, to an external agent, as they are a tribute paid their own inner, personal, and unreasoned fear. In this respect they are like some Europeans, foster brothers of these idiots, who believe in the salt cellar, crossed knives, thirteen at the table, Friday, etc., who turn over the salad bowl before undertaking a serious matter, or slide a four-leaf clover into their vest pockets. And why? It brings good luck, causes success. And how? They cannot tell you, for with them it is not reasoned -- nor is it with the Bambara.

2. Gnéna of the Third Group; The Eight /sic/ Categories of Powerful Gnéna

776 The third group of genii have their priests and ministers;
782 saraka are not enough for them, and they receive sacrifices. The
796 public sacrifices are annual, and the whole population -- men, women, and children -- participate. Dégé (/millet/ flour mixed with water), white hens, and white kola nuts are the usual material of the sacrifice, and the formula recited can always be reduced to the following: "Give us water; cause peace to reign among us, in the

776 782 796 village and in our families; grant us plenty and wealth, give us many wives, healthy and vigorous children, and a long and hearty old age." If the occasion is semipublic /109/ or public, a general sacrifice is always offered in the name of the family, the quarter, or the village, and then individual sacrifices follow. On the days when they are held, there are always dances and drinking bouts, for the favors of a fetish cannot be obtained except by leaping to the sound of drums and by getting drunk.

At the risk of repeating myself, I cannot resist giving the fascinating side of the Negroes' attachment to their fetishism and describing the festivals and celebrations in honor of the principal fetishes -- in order that the reader may gain a greater understanding and feeling for their worship.

The N'tomo, the Special Children's Fetish

852 796 The harvest is over, and the yield of the field cultivated by the children during the winter, together with the small donations received from the people of the village, allows the n'tomigi (head of the confraternity) and his siéré (aide, deputy) to furnish its initiates and the old men -- the latter are never forgotten -- with a plentiful feast of kola nuts, millet béer, or d'lo, and /millet/ flour mixed with honey water and milk, or dégé. The day of the celebration is set by the head of the village and by the elders, and everyone prepares for it two weeks in advance. In the blon, or entrance huts, and in the shade of trees, one sees nothing but old men cutting and sewing dloki, bougi, bogo, and yaba (1), which will be worn for the first time on

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1. Dloki, a large blouse. Bougi, near Ségou, a kind of pants without legs; in Bani country, a strip of cloth three to four fingers wide which goes around the waist, passes between the thighs, and drops in back, forming flaps over the heavy part of the thighs.

852 794 Every time one of the three principal members of the staff, wants to dance, respects are paid to them or to their leader, and all day and all night nothing is heard but frightful "you you" and atrocious cries. There is a protocol for everyone to follow, and before each to-n-dé begins to prance in front of the drums, he goes and bows to his leader to show his devotion and respect for him. He holds himself like a spring, brandishes the gun, ax, or stick that he will use in the dance, and in one jump strikes his feet together under the nose of the one to whom he is paying his respects. The women are quieter and show their respect by a genuflection before the master.

In addition to his staff the master of a n'golo, the to-n-tigi, has pages, a standard bearer, trumpeters, and soldiers, and to vary the program he goes here and there with his frenzied band to greet an elder and give him a serenade. In some villages custom decrees that the youths put on the best they have in the way of clothing; in others, on the contrary, they must get themselves up in horrible, dirty rags so that, on seeing them thus clad, one asks where they could have dug up all these horrors. They must amuse themselves and be [522] amused, laugh and cause laughter, and this last aim is always accomplished as they have such priceless mimics. /114/

The Mouso ka djiri, the Women's Special

976 796 831 It is impossible to know all the genii responsible for watching over women, for they are legion. Every month, at the new moon, the women organize a dance in their honor, and every year they make a public, solemn sacrifice to them. The most widespread is the mouso ka djiri, and its worship flourishes especially in Bani country.

When its festival comes, all the excised women offer it a little /millet/ flour mixed with water, a hen, and two kola nuts, and the head of the village, or, in his absence, an elder, goes and reddens the bark of the fetish tree (1). There is no need for me to go into

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1. Some people assert that they have seen women sacrificing. I have seen women perform saraka involving bloodshed, but never a sacrifice.

776 this sacrifice at length, for in the preceding chapter I stated the
796 function of the fetish; it may be imagined that the ladies and maidens
831 ask for whatever makes a woman strong and beautiful. Moreover, the indecent dances to which they abandon themselves under the sacred tree sufficiently reveal their inner thoughts. They have only one -- to show their breasts to the fetish and scratch their navels on its bark; in some villages custom demands this, and it is required of all. Young girls do it to develop their breasts, married women to become fertile, and all of them to be protected from the unpleasant accidents peculiar to their sex.

796 There is no festival without a feast and none without drinking, and the women offer the whole village sorghum gruel and beer for a drinking bout. They also offer kola nuts to all the elders and heads of families, and they know better than to withhold this treat from fathers, husbands, grown sons, older brothers, and those they love.

The Sinsin, the Special Twin's Fetish

782 The sacrifice to a sinsin is made on the umbilical cord which
845 is hung in the center of plates of woven grass that constitute the
778 fetish. Each plate belongs to one of the twins and even bears his
852 name. The sacrifices in honor of this fetish are always double; for each child separately, the family offers /millet/ flour /115/ mixed with water, millet beer, a kola nut, and a hen.

845 This is strictly a family fetish; the father of the family is its
778 priest, and only the children and their parents are present at the
852 sacrifices. Everything is done in a quiet and happy intimacy, and although there may be a few drunkards here and there, there is never an orgy. Sacrifices to a sinsin are made very frequently to bring its blessing to the mother and children; they are also performed on all occasions of the slightest importance in the lives of the twins: when their hair is cut eight days after birth, at the tattooing festival, at circumcision, at marriage, etc. Once a year a more formal sacrifice is made; the women cook d'lo, the millet beer, and the

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852 old men and important people of the village, as well as friends, are invited to squat before the jugs and partake of the liquid refreshment.

The Dasiri Fetish, Protector of Villages

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621 The dasiri is the chief of all the gnena, or djine. In order that its worship may be better understood and that the reader may have an idea of the power of its priest, I must go into a few details which cannot help but throw some light on Bambara organization. Let us, for example, take a village that is being founded: we are present at the election of the priest of the dasiri, the gnéna-n-sonnaba; at the choice of the fetish tree and of the sacred animal, the genie's mount; at the enthroning of the sacrificer; and finally at the sacrifices.

Election of the priest

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482 The population has grown, the surrounding land is exhausted, and a group of families must move out. The old men who are still lively and the youths full of strength and life take up their arms and fasten a dirty goatskin, a foroko of provisions, on their shoulders and scatter in the bush in search of less ungrateful soil. When they have found it they go back to their homes, and the council of family heads meets to choose a leader. This leader is really a priest, for his chief function is to sacrifice in a public and formal manner to the blonda ba sou (1), the shades of the great entry hut /116/, that is, to leaders

1. Blon, "entry hut"; da, "door," "doorsill"; ba, "great"; sou, "corpses," "shades."

and priests who, just like him, held the reins of power, and to the gnéna, genii, spirits, and fetishes, whence come his names of gnéna-n-sonna ("he who sacrifices to the gnéna fetishes") and gnéna-n-sonnaba ("great sacrificer of the gnéna fetishes"). He alone has the authority to sacrifice to all /these spirits/ in the name of all /the people/.

621 793 555 The palavers and deliberations are long, but the choice is a happy one; the old man chosen as gnéna-n-sonnaba always has the slyness and guile characteristic of the Bambara type. Patient and likeable, he will know how to be just and impartial in disputes, diplomatic and sufficiently master of himself to say only what he intends to. He will know how to acquire the reputation of an upright man who does not know theft or falsehood.

621 793 Elected for life to hold both civil and religious power, he is truly the head of the village, the dougoutigi. His position is hereditary; it passes from brother to brother and, when there are none, goes by right to his oldest son. The one who is to succeed him becomes his aide (siéré), and the heads of families (gouatigi-ou) compose his council; they are always summoned when a question is to be handled or a decision made.

The Choice of the dasiri fetish and its sacred mount

776 778 787 The new village has a head, his aide, and its council; it is organized. Now they must find out the whereabouts of the spring, rock, or tree where lives the protecting spirit, the dougou dasiri (1),

1. Dougou dasiri: /dougou/, "village"; da, "mouth," "entrance"; siri, "bind."

who fastens the entrance to the village and watches over it. For this knowledge the people appeal to a sorcerer; he has intimate contact with the spirits, knows their ways and customs, and understands their language.

There are many sorcerers, and they do not all work in the same way. One discovers his oracles in the entrails of a hen, a second traces cabalistic signs on ashes, a third endlessly moves little stones, bones, and cowrie shells, counting them again and again. To locate the dasiri, people have recourse to the flélikéla (2) diviner, who

2. Flélikéla, "to look attentively, curiously."

776 works with a gourd three quarters full of water.
778 When he has received his honorarium of 40 cowrie shells, which
787 he takes in both hands, he places beside him in the dust his little /117/ gift, consisting of two kola nuts, a few hens, or better, a small billy goat. He asks about the place chosen for the new village and has it described to him down to the smallest detail. Then he takes down a dirty n'go (1) on which he places a gourd which he tips slowly right

1. A ring made of braided roots
bound with cotton thread, which
is covered with a thick layer of blood.

and left, forward and backward, to give it a firm position on its stand. Having done this, he sums up for the spirits the conversation which he has had, and then, with eyes afire and holding his breath, he gives the gourd three flicks with the middle finger of his right hand. They say that a soft murmur, a murmur which is none other than the voices of the genii, is noticed by all present. They hear without understanding, but the sorcerer knows these voices and when he rises it is with a tone of authority that he names the dasiri and the animal which will be its mount.

In the province of Ségou the dasiri is a tree; the tamarind, the false cedar, and the baobab are the preferred trees. The sacred mount, also called dasiri, is a snake, an iguana, a rat, a donkey, etc., but most frequently it is a billy goat.

778 Enthronement of the gnéna-n-sonnaba, priest of the dasiri and
621 dougoutigi, head of the village

Our Blacks establish the new village and build their huts. Near the fetish tree each family sets up its mortars for grinding sorghum, places its hearths, and installs its kitchens. Bows, guns, and farming implements are hung on the branches of the dasiri, and while the work of settling continues, meals are eaten and dances held in its shade, and in the evening when the moon is shining it is near the tree that they finally stretch out to sleep.

778 the fetish tree, the former by the children who smear themselves
782 and whiten their entire faces, and the latter by the men and circum-
796 cised youths (1).

1. By the main sacrifice I mean the sacrifice made in the name of the whole village.

After the noon meal men, women, and children go to the public square to drink beer, or d'lo, and to dance. /119/ The signal for the celebration is given by the gnéna-n-sonnaba, who makes a little speech inviting his children (né ka démisenou, "my children," "my subjects") to have fun and to drink but to avoid fights and quarrels, and then launches into a quadrille. While he dances, the crowd stands bareheaded, cries "you you" loudly, and competes as to who will shake his spear or ax to beat the measure. This annual festival goes on for three or four days, as long as the d'lo, or millet beer, lasts.

776 All circumcised men and excised women may, through the
782 intermediary of the gnéna-n-sonnaba, offer a sacrifice to the genie protector of the village. Anyone who thinks he has offended or displeased it offers one -- with or without bloodshed according to his means -- to obtain pardon, propitiate it, and gain its favor. Individuals sacrifice primarily to make requests; a di ("give it") are the first words they were able to lisp as infants. A sterile woman
[842] will offer it a kola nut, dégé, a rooster or a hen at every moment, always promising not to be miserly and to give more if she becomes a mother. She will be especially assiduous toward the dasiri animal, the mount of the genie of this name; she will coax it, stuff it with bran, and will often go far into the bush to pick it a stalk of grass or a leafy branch which are its delicacies.

776 Genii spirits can leave the spring, the rock, or the tree where
778 they have established their dwellings, and the dasiri is no exception to this rule. If it does so, the fetish tree loses its sanctity, becomes a common object, and can be destroyed. Similarly, all things in the sacred grove, both plant and animal, cease to be taboo and can be used for their customary purposes. The dasiri is not at all fickle.

776 It rarely leaves its tree; it likes its little grove and shady park, and
778 in many places it is satisfied with a stump that is all blackened, worm eaten, rotten, and falling to pieces.

The formula of the sacrifice

782 When one is present at a sacrifice to the dasiri and sees the
781 gnéna-n-sonnaba uncover his head, take off his large blouse, and crouch at the feet of the fetish, one expects something imposing and grand. Nothing of the sort occurs, and one is quite surprised to find so little gravity /120/ in such an important act. People enjoy themselves and chat; the priest, red with blood, tosses off witticisms and coarse jokes, and while feet and wings of the victims -- goats, sheep, and hens -- twitch in the agonies of death, nothing passes from one group to another but bursts of laughter that finally disappear far off at the edge of the grove where the women are.

782 The words in the sacrificial formula vary a little from one village to another, all depending on the volubility of the sacrificer. Nevertheless, it remains basically the same everywhere. After having greeted the fetish in his own name and the name of his subjects, he implores it to forgive them all the insults, offenses, and disrespect toward it, of which they have been guilty, voluntarily or involuntarily, during the entire year. He then calls it by a name related to the type of tree in which it is located -- e.g., ma ziraba ("great baobab man"), ma djala ba ("great false-cedar man"), -- and announces that he is going to sacrifice. While offering the dégé and d'lo, he implores it to protect them against the evils of the sons of the fetish siri, the souba (1), to preserve them from the souya maou (2), the

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1. Sou, "night"; ba, "great." The souba are masters of the night who change themselves into hyenas or owls, dig up corpses, and eat human flesh.

2. Souyaké, "to prowl at night."

carry out their indecencies, shout obscenities, drink, and get drunk. And for three consecutive nights after the burial the same scenes are repeated in front of the fetish tree.

The anniversary of the death of a koredé ("son of koré") who became a koretigi (priest of koré), a gnéna-n-sonnaba (priest of the dasiri) or a gouatigi (head of a group, of a family), is celebrated with pomp; the family always makes it a point of honor to cook d'lo (beer), and people come from all directions to take part in the orgy. /127/

Chapter 7

The Worship of Satan or Worship of the Gnâ, or Boli

1. What is Meant by Gnâ, or Boli

Ever since God created their race and put it into the world, the Bambara have respected, venerated, and sacrificed to the gnéna, or djiné, those beings who are intermediate between angels and men. When one of them forgets himself under the influence of a jug of beer so far as to open to you -- oh, very slightly! -- a recess of his soul, he delights in telling you this, but he is careful not to make such a statement when he speaks to you of the gnâ, or boli. For although the beginnings of boli worship fade into the dark of the ages, it nevertheless has its history. The origin of each boli is known, and an initiate, however little instructed in its rites, can tell you whether it comes from the north or south, east or west, and whether it is male or female; and every graybeard can recite its family tree for you.

There is a great difference between the gnéna and the gnâ; they are different in every way, and we have here two beliefs which, though parallel, are absolutely distinct. Any object, whatever it may be, can become the home of a gnena, but these spirits prefer a living being, a plant, a tree, or an animal, for example, and when one is tired of its dwelling it moves elsewhere. A gnâ always lives in an

776 inanimate object, and whether the form it takes is human or animal, whether it resembles an eggplant, a potato, or a napkin ring, that form remains a boli as long /128/ as there is a piece left that is visible to the naked eye, and the boli never leaves it. In the case of the boli, there is such a close union between the object and the spirit that this combination becomes one and the same individual; it is the union of soul and body in order to make up a person or individual.

776 782 In sacrifices to the gnéna, the reverence of the Negro is not directed to the spring, the tree, the plant, etc., but to the genie that inhabits it. But in sacrifices to the gnâ, reverence is directed simultaneously to the spirit and to its object; one does not exist, is not thought of, without the other. Negroes have often given me to understand this, and one of my old friends, in order to explain his worship, expressed himself in these words: "When you honor your friend, is it his body or his soul that you honor? It is neither his body nor his soul; you honor both at the same time, the person himself as a whole, your friend; that is how it is with the boli." (1) /129/

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1. In Bambara:

"Ne koko, n'i bé i terké bôgna, i be a fari bôgna wa ouala a dousou bôgna. I té i terké bôgna wa? A bé té boliou fé koï. An bi Sétané bôgna wa ouala a fen yéré bôgna, héwa, anou dé bi boli bôgna.

"Faran fasili do be dasiri, djiri an'a djiné tjé. N'i b'a djiri son, i dé bé dasiri son, nka, i bé dasiri bôgna doron? Djiri te fen gouansan yé? a ti fouï gnâ.

"Taï, o do.

Translation:

"I myself say: if you honor your friend, do you honor his body or his soul? You honor your friend, don't you? It is the same with the boli. Do we honor satan or do we honor his object? Assuredly, it is the boli.

"There is a difference between the dasiri tree and its genie. If you sacrifice to the tree, you sacrifice to the dasiri, but do you not honor the dasiri alone? Is the tree not a mere object? It gives us nothing.

"Exactly, that's right.

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"O fara n fasili-ïn te boli dé ni sétané tjé wa? Nibé boli dé son, i be Sétané son tigné, nka i be sétané bôgna doron, boli dé, héwa fen min yéra o dé te foui gnâ.

"O té, djiné ni boli ma-n-kan, boli dé hen, an be fen min yé, o be fen gnâ dérén. Sétané an'o fen olou foula té ké boli yé wa?"

"Does this difference not exist between the boli and satan? If you sacrifice to the boli, you sacrifice to satan, that is certain; but you honor only the demon, and its object is no help to you.

"No, you haven't understood. A genie and a boli are not the same. The boli is bound to what we see; it is useful to us. Satan and his object, both together -- do they not make up the boli?"

Boli dé: An object in which is found the spirit the Negroes call Sétané, "Satan."

776 The gnéna, or djiné, half man and half angel, malicious though it is, can nevertheless do good and grant a direct blessing by performing a good act. But the gnâ, the boli, a fallen angel (méléké sifa do do, " it is a kind of angel"), in revolt against God and, as I stated in my chapter on God, condemned to the tortures of fire, is entirely evil and cannot directly do a good deed (1). It can never-

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1. I challenge the European "Bambara scholars" of Ségou to listen to the two djéli (storytellers /griots/) of Goïn, a small village a short distance from this center. The sacred dances and songs of the boli are their specialty, and they travel over the

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whole circle in the dry season. For example, the master of a Nama will give an account, and the storyteller will take up the refrain, which always ends: "I have told you truly, the Nama can refrain from evil, but it is capable only of evil (a ka fari, a ka djougou ko djougou). It is evil, very evil!"

776 theless refrain from an evil act and thus indirectly grant a blessing to human beings. The words of the formula in the sacrifices to the gnéna and the gnâ seem identical, and yet, when one has understood the inmost feelings of the Bambara soul, one sees all the difference between them. To one as to the other the Negroes say: "Ka dji d'amma (give us water), ka mousoou d'amma (give us wives), ka nafolo d'amma (give us wealth), etc." But while in speaking to the first they actually ask for water, wives, etc., they make an indirect request to the second, so that their words mean: "Do nothing to keep us from having wives," "do nothing to keep us from having water," etc. In expressing himself this way he uses all his cunning, and all his deceit comes to the surface and is revealed. Yes, he really deserves the epithet that neighboring tribes have given him and of which he is proud; it is misi bo, "cow dung," -- dry on the outside but limp and soft inside, so that it is squashed when it is stepped on. His inner feeling when he addresses the boli is this: "O Spirits, evil genii, you are capable only of evil; may your hatred not attack me or those who are dear to me, may it all be for my enemies and those that can harm me!" /130/

2. The Legend of the Boli

771 This is a very curious legend, for it makes the boli come from
798 Mecca, the holy city! To understand it better, let us remember in
778 passing that Islam has only made the Bambara more attached to their idols. They have died in order to keep them; they answered the

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778 and even going so far as tocause his death." These accounts excited
794 the Negroes' curiosity; they wished to see the boli, wanted to sacrifice to them. They gave themselves to the boli, and thus became their children.

Once the people were initiated, the travelers unveiled the mysteries to them, bound them by the law of secrecy. They imposed upon them the prohibition against admitting uninitiated men and women and children to their ranks, and the sects were formed. These have multiplied continuously; each boli has its own, and since the boli are male and female and produce children, they have become legion, and each village has sects and boli of its own. Although the
778 worship of the boli has not destroyed that of the gnéna, or djiné, it
794 has long exceeded the latter; their sacrifices and drinking bouts are accompanied by an external pomp that has a different grandeur, and no important action is taken without their agreement. It can be asserted without fear of error that the worship of the gnâ, or boli, is the chief religion of the Bambara at the present time. It is the basis of union within families and the foundation of the sina-n-koun, or sworn friendship; through the boli the people of the same village are closely united, and this union extends from one village to another and from one province to another, since all members of a boli's sect are brothers and owe each other mutual assistance under certain specified circumstances.

776 In the Bambara's mind (and I have spoken of this at length in
778 my chapter, "The Ideas of the Bambara are not of Islamic Origin"),
782 the boli are nothing less than intrinsically evil beings in revolt against the Supreme Being, God the Creator and Lord of all things. As the formula of the sacrifice to Touafé Bla suggests, the place where they dwell is fire or hell, and there is not a Negro who will not tell you /134/ that the boli is a demon (sétané). Can it not be said that his religion is a worship rendered to "Satan himself?" He renders this worship in full knowledge of what he is doing. Have I not heard the sacrificer in a sacrifice to a Nama boli (1), shout before cutting the

1. A note by Father Coppe of the White Fathers (unpublished manuscript).

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which I have before me, reports the same fact on the subject of the Komo boli. Moreover, this Father is a student of the Bambara -- when the Blacks of Ségou speak of him, they say, "Bamana-n-do," which means that he spoke and understood their language well.

throat of the victim of the general sacrifice: "Alla djampa ba, i k'an bla, i ka bo an koun na, God, great traitor, leave us, go away from us!" -- and the crowd repeated the blasphemy after him: "Alla djampa ba, i k'anbla, i ka bo an koun na!"

3. Boli Whose Power is Slight

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Since the boli do not all have the same strength and power, and fear is the basis and foundation of Bambara worship, they are not all equally honored. We will divide them into two main groups, those of "little power" and those of "great power," and we will end this chapter with a word on the talking boli, the prerogative of certain sorcerers, and on the sirikoun, another, quite special, kind of boli.

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By boli of little power I mean all evil fetishes which are basically not very terrifying, in the sense that it is thought that they very seldom cause anyone's death. Many of them are primarily medicines, and almost everyone has them. They are tails of cows, goats, dogs, and wild animals; they have no specific names and are generally called foura (2) ("medicine"). Additional "medicines" are the kana,

2. This name foura is given in a general way to all boli; I should therefore remark that the word "medicine" in the sense that we understand it, is not the exact translation of the word foura. This word is in itself untranslatable